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United States Assay Commission
1860-1977**

by R.W. Julian and Ernest E. Keusch



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**THE TOKEN AND MEDAL SOCIETY, INC.
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Medals of the United States Assay Commission 1860-1977

The United States Assay Commission owes its existence to a suggestion in the **Report on the Establishment of a Mint** presented to Congress by Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton in January 1791. He thought it wise that some measure be adopted that would insure the purity of the coinage and the honesty of the Mint officials. The ideas were put into the Mint Law of April 2, 1792.

The concept of an assay commission was based on the British Trial of the Pyx. It was formally instituted in England by order of King Edward I in 1282, but had been in effect for some years prior to that date.

Originally scheduled to meet in July of each year, a law of 1793 switched the date to the second Monday of February, where it remained until 1873. In 1873 the date was changed to the second Wednesday of February. Until its abolition in 1980 it was the oldest operating Federal commission in the United States.

Although the regular coinage of silver began in October 1794 and gold in July 1795, the first meeting of the Assay commission was not held until March 1797. Until 1980 it failed to meet only once (1817), because there had been no precious-metal coinage since the last meeting. (In the early days of the Mint service, the annual assay tested only those coins struck since the last meeting. After 1837 the Commission dealt with coins struck during the preceding calendar year.)

The Coinage Law of 1837 authorized the president to select private citizens to serve on the Assay Commission, in addition to the regular ex-officio members. For many years the Director of the Mint unofficially selected the members of the Commission by simply sending a list of those he chose to the executive mansion. (A list of Commissioners and dates of service may be found in the current **Coin World Almanac**.)

During the early 1950s, however, there began to be considerable agitation among numismatists to gain a coveted place on the Commission and the procedure was changed. The president was now sent a fairly lengthy list (say double the required number) and then he made a final selection, although it remained possible for the director to flag a name for special consideration. President Carter abolished public participation prior to the 1977 meeting and from 1977 through 1980 only the official members attended the annual testing of the coinage.

No documents have been found which explain why the first Assay medals were struck in 1860. It is possible, however, that the then Director of the Mint, James Ross Snowden, did so for two reasons. The first, and the least important, was a desire to honor the members of the Commission with a medal as a memento of their service.

The other probable reason was more complicated and connected with Snowden's attempt, in the latter part of the 1850s, to enlarge the medal department of the Mint. One of his favorite vehicles for the suggestion of change in the mint system was to have the Assay Commission formally adopt resolutions to be sent to higher powers in the Treasury Department. Presenting medals to Assay Commission members was an effective way of bringing a medal department to their attention.

After being struck for two years in a row – 1860 and 1861 – there was a lapse in production from 1862 through 1866. Striking was resumed on an annual basis in 1867. It is not clear why there was a hiatus, but as this time coincides perfectly with James Pollock's first term as director, there can be little doubt who made the decision.

When William Millward replaced Pollock in the latter part of 1866, he was in a delicate political position with President Andrew Johnson in office. His decision to resume the production of Assay medals may be viewed partly in that light. By 1869, when Pollock returned, the custom of issuing annual Assay Commission medals was well established.

Assay medals for the early years show a number of diverse motifs. Ordinarily there was an allegorical design on at least one of the sides, usually symbolic of the art of coining or assaying. On occasion it was topical, such as the medal on the centennial celebration in 1876 or the death of Director H.R. Linderman in 1879. Beginning in 1880 it became customary to portray the current president (or occasionally the secretary of the treasury) on the obverse.

In general the distribution of the Assay medals in the last century was very tightly controlled by Mint officials. The distribution list included the regular commissioners, the Mint officers and, usually, a few higher treasury officials. The president also received one if his portrait was on the piece.

The tightly controlled system occasionally broke down, as happened in 1874, when New York Assay Office Superintendent Thomas Acton's request for several medals raised an uproar. Acton did get his medals, meant for his friends, but after 1874 probably never asked for more than one. Officials of the Mint were able to have a medal in silver by simply paying for the metal used. They were also able to obtain copies of the various pattern Assay pieces at intrinsic cost.

By about 1900 the strict system was relaxed a bit and the distribution list widened considerably. It was also possible until about 1910 to have restrikes made from the dies on hand, although by 1905 nearly all the pre-1893 dies (excepting 1885, 1888, and 1892) had been defaced. It is likely that all dies dated prior to 1885 were destroyed to prevent further restrikes being made.

A stricter policy of distribution began again in 1910 and for the next decade very few medals went astray and it is believed that virtually no restriking took place. The **American Journal of Numismatics** for July 1910 has the following information:

"[The medals of 1910] were the last to be struck under the former rules. Under the new Regulations announced by Mr. A. Piatt Andrew, Director of the Mint, and approved June 4, 1910, by Hon. Charles D. Norton, Acting Secretary of the Treasury, in future 'One medal shall be awarded to each of those who actually serve upon the Commission, including the Secretary of the Commission and the Director of the Mint, and any additional copies which may have been struck shall be defaced and destroyed immediately after the meeting of the Commission. All Assay Medals of a given year shall be of identical material, and no such medals of earlier dates shall be struck.' Heretofore, as is well known to collectors, they have been coined in aluminum, copper, bronze, and silver..."

This policy was relaxed about 1918 and until 1935 it seems likely that Assay Commission medals were not all that difficult to get. It is rumored that all one had to do was apply in person at the Philadelphia Mint and ask for the current Assay medal in order to obtain a specimen between 1920 and 1935.

After 1935 a very strict policy was reinstated and most medals after that date, with minor exceptions, are hard to find. Medals of the 1940s and 1950s are especially difficult to acquire because of stringent rules laid down by the Bureau of the Mint on how they were to be distributed; in some cases even the artist responsible for the dies was not given a specimen. As most Assay medal dies after 1900 were kept at the Mint (and are still there) it is clear that indiscriminate restriking did not take place after 1910.

Since the late 1890s the artistic policy for the Assay medals has fluctuated considerably. Plaques were struck early in the century, especially under President Theodore Roosevelt. President Taft's administration favored a stereotyped art typical of the age while under President Woodrow Wilson there was some change and experimentation.

One of the finest of the Wilson pieces was made in 1918, when the first of the modern designs was produced. This was followed in 1919 by a Sinnock reverse of outstanding quality even though there was a reversion to a classical theme. The reverse of the 1920 medal, by Morgan, is also of superb artistry and commemorates the ending of World War I.

During the 1920s there was at first a fascination with eagles (the obverse was usually that of the president or high official) but in 1926 Sinnock returned with an allegorical reverse on a Mint theme. One of the rare political themes of the post-war years came in 1927 with the National Prosperity reverse by Sinnock. From 1928 to 1930 interest in the early Mint came to the fore and some fine reverses were executed. The year 1932 featured a motif based on the George Washington bicentennial.

The year 1936 proved something of a watershed in Assay medals. Officials had forgotten all about needing a new medal for that year's meeting and at the last moment decided to mule two regular three-inch presidential medal obverses (Washington and Franklin Roosevelt). Distribution was very tightly controlled for this issue and even today it is extremely difficult for the collector to find. The last auction record was \$4400, a very high figure for an American medal struck at the Philadelphia Mint in this century. (This was, however, exceeded by the \$5500 realized by the 1914 silver medal in the December 3, 1988, Presidential Coin & Antique Auction.)

In 1937 the date of the presidential inauguration fell on January 20 as a result of the XXth amendment to the United States Constitution. Prior to that time the date had been March 4, after the February meeting of the Assay Commission. This change meant that a different political party, from the one in power, could choose the design for the next medal: this happened in 1953 (Eisenhower), 1961 (Kennedy), and 1969 (Nixon).

Although the artwork through the late 1940s is of a generally high character, the Mint frequently reused old motifs because of the wartime emergency and postwar coinage problems. The 1945 obverse did feature an outstanding Liberty head (based on the famous *Libertas Americana*) but otherwise there is little new or outstanding until about 1950 when relaxed pressure on the coinage enabled Mint artists to exercise their talents.

Designs on the reverses of the Assay Commission medals (obverses were usually portraits) after about 1915 were generally dictated by the Director of the Mint, sometimes in consultation with the White House. On occasion a particular artist would be chosen to submit sketches while at other times more than one engraver would be asked for sketches. The director normally made the final choice.

In 1954 officials decided not to have the annual medal. The Commissioners chose to use the regular three-inch bronze Lincoln presidential medal (then and now sold to the public) and had their names inscribed on the edge. (The policy of engraving names on the edge began about 1915 and continued, generally, until the end of public participation in 1976.)

The obverse for 1952, by Gilroy Roberts, has been acclaimed for its outstanding adaptation of a classical theme while Frank Gasparro's 1974 reverse has been praised as a stunning example of medallic craftsmanship. Both of these medals show what the engravers were capable of if given latitude and the proper amount of time.

The final years of the Gerald Ford presidency showed some remarkable artistic ingenuity when the medals became oval. It may well be that this format was chosen especially to accommodate the fine rendition of Washington Crossing the Delaware for the American Bicentennial celebration. The last medal returned to the theme of the early Mint: even though earlier motifs were used, the whole ensemble — in league with that of 1976 — showed high talent in the arrangement and execution.

President Carter abolished the public part of the Commission in early 1977 and the medals (struck in pewter for 1976-77) for 1977 were then made in quantity for sale to the public. At \$20 each they sold quickly until the mid-1980s when the last one was sold. The Commission was abolished under Public Law 96-209, passed March 14, 1980. Mint Director Donna Pope suggested reinstituting the Commission in 1982 but did not succeed.

By the 1880s there was a number of collectors avidly chasing the early Assay medals but this activity died out in the early 1900s and few bothered with this specialized field. It was not until the 1970s that collecting interest in this series became strong once more and at the present there is considerable competition for the rarer pieces, especially those struck since 1936.

There have been a number of noted collectors and dealers handling Assay medals over the years, including Max Brail, Virgil Brand, Edmund J. Cleveland, David W. Dreyfuss, John J. Ford, Harry Forman, Rogers Fred, Ernest Keusch, Harold P. Newlin, John Pittman, Ed Rice, and Max Schwartz. The Rice Collection at one time included more than 450 pieces.

The Hathaway and Bowers fixed price catalogue of December 1969 was the first major offering during the modern period, closely followed by the Lester Merkin sale of September 25-26, 1970. There have been several major lots of such medals during the past few years, but the greatest public dispersal was that of the fine collection formed by David W. Dreyfuss and sold in 1986.

Metals

Prior to 1901 the Mint normally struck Assay Commission medals in one of two metals: silver or copper. The silver was usually minted as a proof while the copper was chemically treated after striking and given the name of **copper-bronzed** to distinguish it from regular bronze metal. Prior to about 1890 the copper-bronzed medals ordinarily had a fine mahogany finish.

Considerable attention has been paid to the thickness of the various Assay medals, especially for the 1870s and 1880s. Some think that this is evidence of restriking but more likely it merely shows that the Mint used whatever planchets were on hand at the time for the Assay medals. For certain years there are great differences in the thicknesses of the copper-bronzed medals in particular.

The Mint purchased sheet copper in various gauges for its regular medal business and when one thickness was out of stock another was used. Only in the case of silver did the Mint make its own sheets (from which the silver blanks were punched) and here again it is likely that differing thicknesses were kept on hand for private medal strikings. It is therefore probable that thick or thin medals do not determine much of anything except the stock from which the blank was cut.

On occasion medals were struck in white metal (tin) or aluminum. Lead strikes also exist, though most are really die trials so that officials could examine the state of the dies or design. A few medals in nickel (probably copper-nickel) also exist.

Beginning in 1902 real bronze was used and various finishes were then applied after striking. Silver medals were seen only rarely after 1917. Only one gold Assay medal is known to have been struck, in 1921, though a rumor says that one exists for 1909.

Striking

All Assay medals made prior to 1901 were struck in a collar, which gave the piece its smooth edge finish. In most cases, but perhaps not all, prior to 1895 the Assay medals were struck at least twice. In a few cases, such as the three-inch Cleveland medals of the 1880s, there would have been 15 or 20 blows from the dies in the old screw press.

Beginning in 1895, the Assay medals were struck on the hydraulic press which meant that generally only one blow from the dies would have been sufficient. In a few rare cases two strikes might have been necessary.

After 1900 the Mint adopted the current French technique of striking medals without a collar for the larger pieces. The plaques called for a special edge-trimming technique but the large bronze pieces were struck on the hydraulic press and then turned down in a lathe to the proper size. For this reason no two of the round medals after 1901 are of the same precise size. Large mint medals are still being made without a collar.

Models and Dies

Assay medal dies made prior to 1907 used a method in effect since 1837. The artist first made a clay model of the vignette (a bust of an individual, etc.) from which a plaster copy was prepared. Then an electrotype (or galvano) in copper was made. The galvano was placed on the reducing machine (*Tour a Portrait*) and the hub — a positive image — engraved using the pantograph principle.

The engraver impressed the hub into a blank piece of steel the size of the desired die. Then the lettering was punched in by hand and the die hardened for use. Purchase of the Hill Reducing Lathe in 1867 allowed the preparation of slightly better hubs, but otherwise the process was the same. (There are a few dies of 1890s and the early 1900s in which the lettering was modelled rather than punched, however.)

In 1907 the Janvier Reducing Lathe was purchased and with this machine the engraver usually prepared complete models, including the lettering. This may be noticed just as easily on the coinage of the period by examining the lettering very closely under 5x magnification.

Translations

The translations from Latin to English were all made by Miss Gertrude Johnson of Frankfort, Indiana, formerly of Logansport, Indiana. She was the high-school Latin teacher of one of the authors (RWJ).

Size

The diameters of the medals given are meant to be accurate but it should be noted that medals do vary in size, especially if made the modern way. Even when struck in a collar, the collar would sometimes break in the midst of a striking run and have to be replaced with one of slightly different size. For this reason there is never an absolute size for an Assay medal of a given year. Measurements given in this catalogue are accurate within one millimeter.

(25.4 millimeters equal one inch.)

Early auction catalogs used the 'American' scale of sixteenths of an inch, as did the Mint before 1900. Size 21 meant, in this system, 1 5/16 inches, the diameter of most Assay medals in the 19th century.

Rarity

Rarity is an uncertain science for the Assay Commission medals as many of the pieces are still in the hands of the Commission member or a descendant. The following is the estimated rarity for specimens in public and private numismatic collections. It is not possible, at present, to give a rarity by metal. The Sheldon scale is used, based on the following numbers:

<u>Rarity</u>	<u>Estimated number of specimens</u>
R1	1250 +
R2	501 - 1250
R3	201 - 500
R4	76 - 200
R5	31 - 75
R6	13 - 30
R7	4 - 12
R8	2 - 3
Unique	1

<u>AC No.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Rarity</u>
1	1860	R5
2	1861	R5
3	1867	R5
4	1868	R5
5	1869	R5
6	1869	R6
7	1869	Unique
8	1870	R3
9	1871	R5
10	1871	R5
11	1872	R6
12	1873	R5
13	1874	R5
14	1875	R5
15	1876	R5
16	1877	R5
17	1877	R6
18	1878	R5
19	1879	R5
20	1880	R5
21	1880	R6
22	1880	R6
23	1880	R7
24	1881	R5
25	1882	R5
26	1883	R5
27	1884	R5
28	1885	R5
29	1886	R5
30	1887	R5
31	1888	R6
32	1889	R5
33	1890	R4
34	1891	R5
35	1891	R8
36	1892	R5
37	1893	R5
38	1894	R5
39	1895	R5
40	1896	R5
41	1897	R5
42	1898	R5
43	1899	R5
44	1900	R5
45	1901	R5
46	1902	R5
47	1903	R5
48	1904	R5
49	1905	R5
50	1906	R5

<u>AC No.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Rarity</u>	<u>AC No.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Rarity</u>
51	1907	R5	101	1957	R7
52	1908	R6	102	1958	R7
53	1909	R3	103	1959	R7
54	1910	R5	104	1960	R7
55	1911	R6	105	1961	R7
56	1912	R6	106	1962	R7
57	1913	R5	107	1963	R7
58	1914	R6	108	1964	R7
59	1915	R7	109	1965	R7
60	1916	R6	110	1966	R7
61	1917	R6	111	1967	R7
62	1918	R5	112	1968	R7
63	1919	R5	113	1969	R5
64	1920	R5	114	1970	R7
65	1921	R5	115	1971	R7
66	1922	R4	116	1972	R7
67	1923	R4	117	1973	R7
68	1924	R4	118	1974	R7
69	1925	R5	119	1975	R7
70	1926	R4	120	1976	R7
71	1927	R4	121	1977	R2
72	1928	R4			
73	1929	R4			
74	1930	R4			
75	1931	R3			
76	1932	R4			
77	1932	R8			
78	1933	R4			
79	1934	R4			
80	1935	R5			
81	1936	R7			
82	1937	R6			
83	1938	R6			
84	1939	R6			
85	1940	R6			
86	1941	R7			
87	1942	R7			
88	1943	R7			
89	1944	R7			
90	1945	R7			
91	1946	R7			
92	1947	R7			
93	1948	R7			
94	1949	R7			
95	1950	R7			
96	1951	R7			
97	1952	R7			
98	1953	R7			
99	1955	R7			
100	1956	R7			

It should be noted that value does not depend upon rarity because, for example, several of the presidents (especially Washington, both Roosevelts, Eisenhower, and Kennedy) have specialists in their medals.

Photographs

Photographic sources, by AC numbers:

American Numismatic Society: 7–9, 14, 27, 29–32, 34, and 36.

Bowers and Merena: 1–6, 10–13, 15–22, 24–26, 28, 33, 37–54, 57, 61–75, 76a, 78, 80–81, 83–85, 97, 103–117, and 121.

Smithsonian (National Numismatic Collection): 55–56, 58–60, 76b, 79, 82, 86–96, 98–102, and 119–120.

Philip Keller: 118.

The Bowers and Merena photographs (by Cathy Dumont) are from various auction catalogues, but the principle source was the Dreyfuss sale. R.W. Julian and Randolph Zander photographed the Smithsonian medals.

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Merkin, Lester. Public auction sale of September 25-26, 1970.

Records of the United States Mint at Philadelphia: extensive use was made of various record series. A list of these and other references will be found in the TAMS medal catalog of 1977 noted above.

Special Note

For some years the medals were struck in more than one metal; and asterisk (*) indicates which of them was actually distributed to the Assay Commissioners. In a few cases this is not yet known.

AC-1

1860



Obverse: Head of liberty to right with LIBERTY on scroll below. Legends MINT OF THE UNITED STATES and PHILADELPHIA around. Letter L on scroll.

Reverse: ANNUAL ASSAY 1860 within wreath of laurel.

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: James B. Longacre

a) Copper

The obverse head is from the hub by Longacre for the pattern half dollars of 1859 (Judd No. 237, etc., which do not have Longacre's initial) while the wreath is similar to that on the regular cent coinage of 1859. The head was based on the statue of Apollo Belvedere in the Vatican, according to Cornelius Vermeule in his book **Numismatic Art in America**. The almost certain reason for this first Assay Commission medal was Director James Ross Snowden's interest in promoting the medal department of the Mint. A specimen in the Keusch collection shows double striking on the reverse, the result of die rotation between strikes.

AC-2

1861



Obverse: As preceding obverse of 1860. Same die.

Reverse: As preceding reverse of 1860 except that the date is 1861.

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: James B. Longacre

a) Copper

This is probably the last new medal ordered by Director Snowden before his term of office ended in mid-May 1861. The enormous demand for coinage in late 1860 and early 1861 may have kept the engraving staff so busy that there was no time to consider alternate designs.

AC-3

1867



Obverse: As preceding; same die.

Reverse: As preceding except for date of 1867.

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: James B. Longacre

a) Silver* b) Copper c) Aluminum d) Nickel

The only reference found in Mint documents for this medal is a notation of February 1867, in the medal accounts of 1861-1887, that the chief coiner was paid \$7.80 for striking twelve Assay medals. This almost certainly meant silver as the aluminum specimen in the Smithsonian is possibly unique. The resumption of Assay medals in 1867 was probably due to a suggestion of Chief Engraver James B. Longacre to Director William Millward. The latter had replaced James Pollock the preceding fall and would possibly have been more receptive to the idea.

AC-4

1868



Obverse: Columbia putting a torch to a pile of arms surrounded by MINT OF THE UNITED STATES and PHILAD. Portion of American shield and fasces behind figure and to right. WB at lower right of device.

Reverse: ANNUAL ASSAY 1868 within ornate wreath of oak and laurel.

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: William Barber.

a) Silver b) Copper* c) Aluminum

Both the obverse and reverse designs for the Assay medal of 1868 appear to be original. The obverse device is allegorical and refers to the recent (1865) end of the Civil War. The reverse wreath was used by Barber later the same year for his Andrew Johnson medal (PR-13).

The listing for silver is based on an entry in the card index for medals at the Massachusetts Historical Society in Boston.

AC-5**1869 (without stars)**

Obverse: Columbia, in long chiton, seated to left with hand resting on American shield. Liberty cap on pole behind.

Reverse: Wreath, with LET US HAVE PEACE on a scroll at top, enclosing inscription ANNUAL ASSAY 1869.

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: William Barber

a) Silver* b) Copper c) Aluminum

The engraver's order book for gold and silver medals (1869-1873) shows twenty-one silver Assay medals of 1869 struck in February. In addition to this, however, the same record shows nineteen more silver medals in April and ten aluminum specimens in March. More medals of AC-5 have been seen than of AC-6, which is the basis for calling AC-5 the medal actually passed out to the commissioners at the February 1869 meeting.

The legend on the reverse, LET US HAVE PEACE, is a reference to U.S. Grant, who had won the election of 1868 and was due to be inaugurated president on March 4, 1869.

AC-6**1869 (with stars)**

Obverse: As preceding, except that thirteen stars surround the figure.

Reverse: Similar to preceding, but not the same die.

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: William Barber

a) Silver b) Copper c) Aluminum

In his 1897 work on Assay medals, Cleveland indicates that the starred obverse developed a die crack when the Assay medals were first made and that the starless obverse (AC-5) was then hurriedly made as a replacement. Known specimens all have a die break at the fifth star (from lower left). It is possible that some of the AC-6 medals were passed out to the commissioners in lieu of AC-5 above.

Q. David Bowers, writing in the Boyd sale (1985), notes that there are minor differences between the reverses of AC-5 and AC-6, the most noticeable being the relationship of A in ASSAY to the leaf at left.

AC-7

1869 (Mule)



Obverse: As preceding obverse of 1868.

Reverse: As preceding reverse of 1869 (AC-6).

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: William Barber

a) Aluminum

The piece was almost certainly made to provide some collector with yet another variety. The only known specimen is in the ANS collection.

AC-8

1870



Obverse: Moneta, standing to right, holding snake and scales. A dog, strongbox, and assay implements are in the field. W.B.F. and J. POLLOCK in exergue.

Reverse: Wreath of oak and laurel surrounding ANNUAL ASSAY 1870. (There is a defect at the upper-right corner of the '8' in 1870.)

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: William Barber

a) Silver b) Copper c) Aluminum

The only record uncovered for the 1870 Assay medal was an entry in the engraver's gold and silver order book for medals (1869-1873) indicating that three silver medals were struck on February 19. The obverse is an original design but the wreath on the reverse is reduced from the medal for Director Linderman (MT-6), or vice versa. The director's name appearing on the obverse of medals for the years 1870 through 1873 is probably more indicative of his having had a hand in the design than any other reason. This is the most commonly-seen Assay medal of the nineteenth century.

W.E. Woodward's 69th sale (October 1884) has a humorous description (No. 1551) of this medal: "A conglomerate design apparently intended to represent an alchemist surrounded by implements of the art. It suggests, however, Justice arrayed as a cook, brewing a cup of tea for a dog who seems patiently waiting while watching a snake who is making a determined effort to commit suicide by getting inside himself. Below this beautiful picture the name of Pollock is conspicuous; reverse, wreath and inscription; bronze, V.F. [Size] 21."

AC-9

1871 (with director's name)



Obverse: Archimedes framed in doorway of classical style. Bathtub, symbolizing his discovery of the specific gravity test for purity of precious metals, to left. **J. POLLOCK DIRECTOR** in exergue.

Reverse: ANNUAL ASSAY 1871 within ornate wreath.

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: William Barber

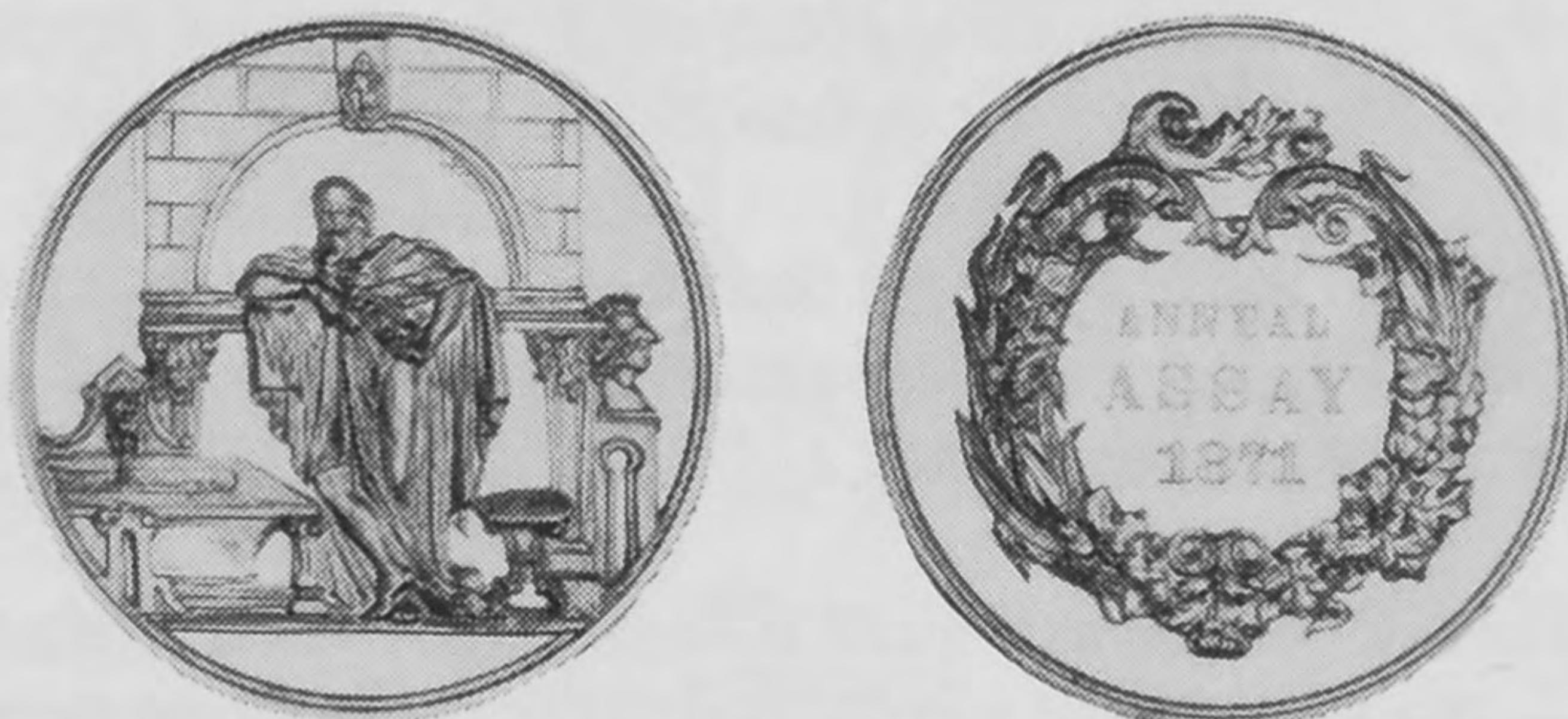
a) Silver* b) Copper c) Aluminum

The engraver's order book mentioned above shows twenty-five silver medals struck in February; another record, however, indicates that \$28.11 worth of silver bullion had been used for the Assay medals of 1871. If the medals were of normal thickness, the sum of \$28.11 works out to about 43 medals, which serves only to confuse the issue. Twenty-four cases were purchased by the medal department for presentation of medals to commissioners and this may be the deciding fact.

The use of Archimedes on the obverse shows quite clearly the strong interest of both Director Pollock and Chief Engraver Barber in the classical period of antiquity.

AC-10

1871 (without director's name)



Obverse: Similar to preceding except for an attempt at clouds in the doorway framing Archimedes. No inscription in exergue.

Reverse: As preceding medal.

Size: 33 mm

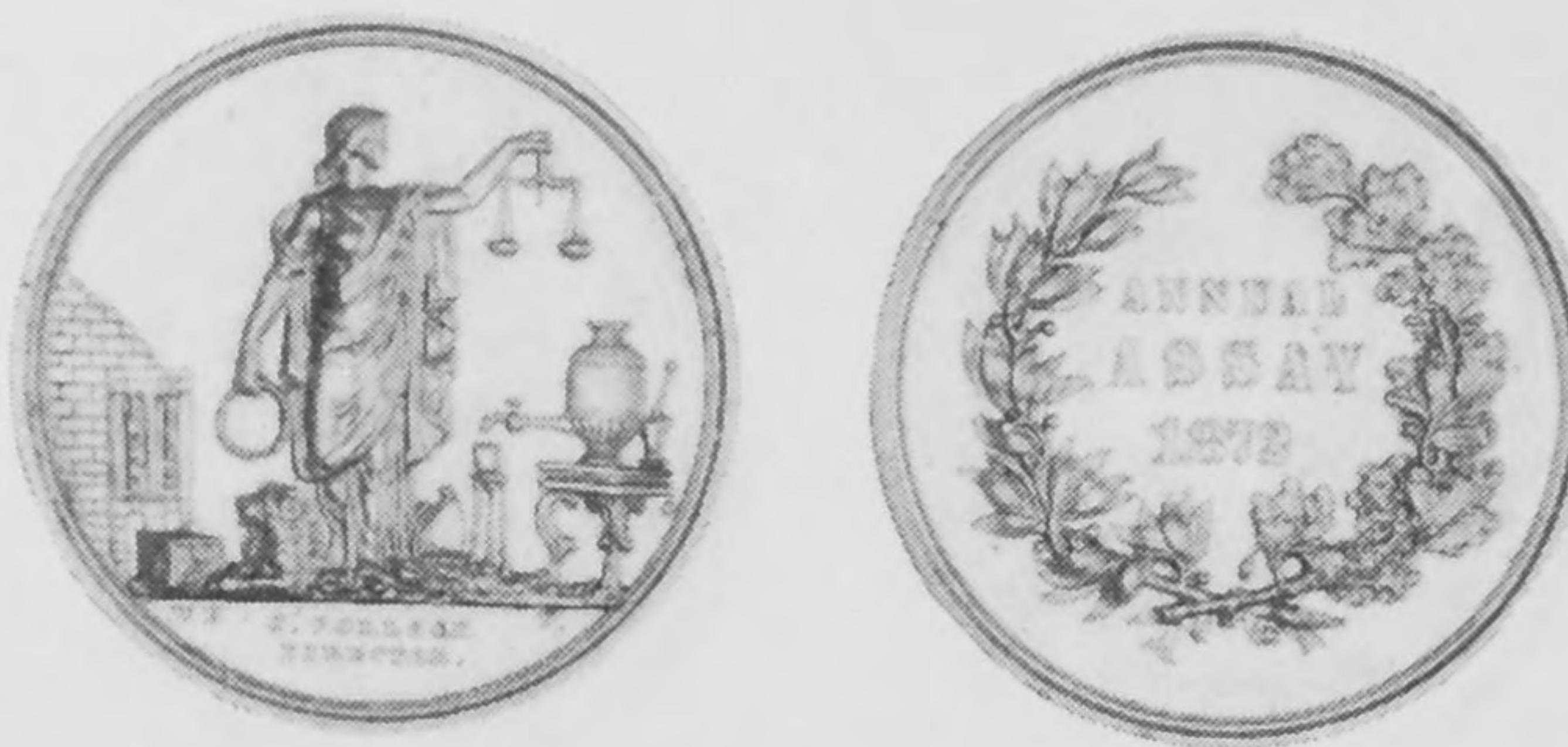
Engraver: William Barber

a) Silver b) Copper c) Aluminum

It is likely that this obverse was rejected by Pollock in favor of the artistically cleaner design of AC-9.

AC-11

1872



Obverse: As vignette of 1870, except for a few minor details. In exergue, W.B. to left and F. to right while J. POLLOCK DIRECTOR is in the center.

Reverse: ANNUAL ASSAY 1872 within wreath identical to that used for the Assay medal of 1870.

Size: 33 mm

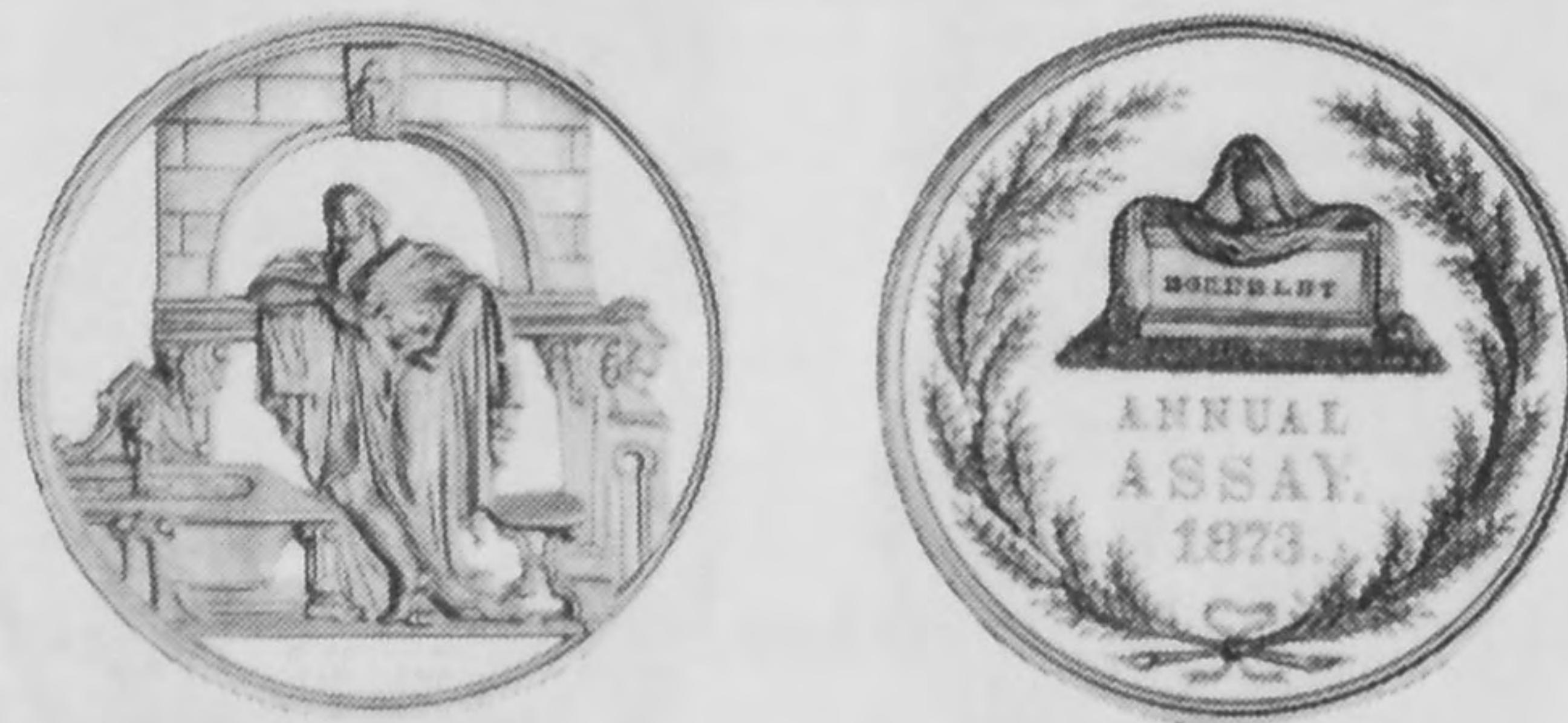
Engraver: William Barber

a) Silver* b) Copper c) Aluminum

Twenty-five silver medals were struck in February 1872. The use of a different, but similar, obverse die to that of 1870 seems to indicate that the 1870 obverse had been destroyed by this time. It is probable that no new designs were prepared for this year's Assay Commission because of William Barber's preoccupation with the Trade dollar patterns then under consideration.

AC-12

1873



Obverse: Identical to obverse die (AC-11) of 1871 with J. POLLOCK DIRECTOR.

Reverse: Catafalque, labelled ECKFELDT, within wreath and ANNUAL ASSAY. 1873. above.

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: William Barber

a) Silver b) Copper c) Aluminum d) White Metal

The funereal device is in honor of long-time Assayer Jacob Eckfeldt, who died on August 9, 1872, in his forty-first year of service to the Philadelphia Mint. Due to his long tenure, wide circle of friends, and a family long connected with the Mint, it is probable that upwards of fifty (or even more) medals in the various metals were struck for varying distribution beyond the regular Assay Commissioners. At least two medals were sent to commissioners unable to attend the meeting due to illness. One of these two, Professor John Torrey, was himself to die shortly and then be honored on the Assay medal of 1874. The D in ECKFELDT was repunched over another letter.



Obverse: Identical to obverse die of 1871 (AC-9) except that exergual inscription is missing.

Reverse: Similar to that of 1873, except that the date is now 1874 and the tomb is labelled J. TORREY, OB. [DIED] MAR. 10, - 73. Slightly different wreath.

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: William Barber

a) Silver* b) Copper c) Aluminum d) White Metal

Professor Torrey, a noted chemist, had been unable to attend the 1873 Assay Commission meeting, to which he had been appointed by President Grant, because of an illness that was to prove fatal the next month. His fame and reputation were such that someone, probably either Pollock or Linderman, ordered the special reverse.

Due to a controversy that erupted in late February 1874 over this medal, we know some details for this year not otherwise available. Thomas Acton, of the New York Assay Office, had been one of the 1874 commissioners. He asked Mint officials to send him several of the 1874 medals in silver so that his friends in New York might have a specimen. On February 23, 1874, Superintendent James Pollock wrote Director Linderman in Washington complaining of Acton's request and indicating that he did not wish to honor it.

In the process of discussing Acton's request, Pollock noted that twenty silver medals had been struck on February 11, 1874, and all distributed. Mint officials Pollock, A.L. Snowden, Booth, DuBois, and Barber had each paid one dollar for a medal, leaving fifteen for the commissioners and Director Linderman. Pollock went on to note that, despite his personal views on the subject, ten more silver medals had already been struck for Acton and now the latter wanted fifteen more.

At this point the accounts become somewhat muddled, but it is known that Acton was sent ten medals on March 4. The only official record of striking came on March 2, when eighteen silver 1874 Assay medals, weighing an average of 16.97 grams each, were delivered by Coiner A. Loudon Snowden. On March 11 the German ambassador was sent two silver medals.

It is clear that at least thirty-eight silver Assay medals were struck and that Mint officials were strongly opposed to their loose distribution.

AC-14

1875



Obverse: As preceding (1874).

Reverse: Wreath enclosing a small sprig and inscription ANNUAL ASSAY 1875.

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: William Barber

a) Copper

On March 2, 1875, Director H.R. Linderman was sent two bronze medals for the cabinet maintained at his office in the Treasury Building, the sole official record found of this issue.

AC-15

1876



Obverse: Bust of George Washington to right with BARBER below truncation.

Reverse: YEAR ONE HUNDRED OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE surrounding closed wreath. Within the wreath is 1776 ANNUAL ASSAY 1876. The date of 1776 is within a glory. Dot in center for centering inscription.

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: William Barber

a) Silver b) Copper* c) Aluminum

In 1875 Director Linderman suggested that the reverse of the Trade dollar be altered, for 1876 only, to reflect the American centennial to be celebrated in that year. The idea was quashed due to the objection of Superintendent James Pollock, who pointed out that this would require an act of Congress. Instead, Linderman's idea was placed on the reverse of the 1876 Assay medal. This particular medal has been very popular and desirable over the years since it is at once a centennial item and Washingtonia.

Baker 347

AC-16

1877 (Archimedes)



Obverse: As obverse of 1875 Assay medal.

Reverse: Similar to reverse of 1872 Assay medal except for the 1877 date and curvature of the word ANNUAL.

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: William Barber

a) Copper

Fiscal year accounts show that twenty-five bronze medals were struck.

AC-17

1877 (Washington)



Obverse: As obverse of 1876, with bust to right. Same die.

Reverse: As preceding medal, AC-16. Same die.

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: William Barber

a) Copper

This is strictly a collector's piece, struck to produce yet another variety of Assay medal. It may well have been produced several years after the stated date as Baker did not mention it in his work on Washington medals published in 1885. Very rare; a specimen was in the Boyd collection of Assay Commission medals sold by Bowers and Merena.

AC-18

1878



Obverse: As obverse of 1876. Same die.

Reverse: ANNUAL ASSAY 1878 within wreath of laurel.

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: William Barber

a) Copper

The reuse of an old obverse for this year can be directly attributed to the great pressure on the engraving staff in the latter part of 1877 and early in 1878 with the preparations for, and actual beginning of, the Morgan silver dollar coinage of 1878.

Baker 348

AC-19

1879



Obverse: Bust to right with legend H.R. LINDERMAN and NA [BORN] 1825. OB [DIED] 1879. Beneath truncation: BARBER. F.

Reverse: Woman laying wreath at tomb labelled HENRY on the front and NA [BORN] 1799 OB [DIED] 1879. [sic] on the side. Tree of life and upended torch to left. Surrounding legend reads ANNUAL ASSAY 1879. and SCIENTIA VIRTUS VERITAS. [KNOWLEDGE COURAGE TRUTH]. JOSEPH HENRY in exergue below tomb. Classical lamp in field.

Size: 38 mm

Engraver: William Barber

a) Silver b) Copper*

Four silver Assay medals were struck on February 14, 1879, having an average weight of 27.45 grams. In addition to this, at least five bronze medals were sent to the Smithsonian Institution after the Commission held its annual meeting. Twenty-five medal cases were purchased from C.C. Schleunes at thirty cents each while one additional, for a total of twenty-six cases, cost seventy-five cents. All of this indicates a minimum of four silver and thirty bronze medals that were struck in 1879. The 1879 medal is the first to be larger than the standard 33mm in use since 1860.

The obverse portrait is reduced from the Linderman director's medal (MT-6), while the reverse is an original work of art. The decision to put the late director's portrait on the obverse must have been a hasty one, because Linderman died on January 27, only a short time before the annual meeting.

The classical lamp and torch on the reverse symbolize scientist Joseph Henry's leadership of the Smithsonian Institution from 1846 through 1878. Henry died in the latter year, not 1879 as stated on the medal.

AC-20

1880



Obverse: Bust of President Rutherford B. Hayes to left with legend THE MINT OF THE UNITED STATES ANNUAL ASSAY 1880. M. on truncation of bust.

Reverse: Half-nude woman lighting lamp of learning with "EFFICACI DO MANUS SCIENTIAE" ["I AM DEVOTED TO USEFUL KNOWLEDGE"] above and PHILADELPHIA in the exergue. Her left hand is resting on an amphora containing oil for the lamp. Initials C.E.B (no period after B) on lower right exergual line.

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: George Morgan (obverse) and Charles Barber (reverse)

a) Silver* b) Copper

AC-20 is the one passed out to the commissioners. The other three designs for the year are unadopted patterns and mules. On February 10, 1880, twenty-nine silver Assay medals were struck, with an average weight of 21.45 grams. A fortnight later, George Morgan paid for five more silver Assay medals of 1880, each weighing an average of 21.65 grams. On March 23 Coiner Oliver C. Bosbyshell delivered four more silver medals, but these, oddly enough, weighed an average of only 17.50 grams.

The reverse of AC-20, by Charles E. Barber, is of superior execution and shows that he was capable of exceptionally fine quality work. This may well have been Barber's opus in his bid to become the chief engraver after the death of his father, William Barber, a few months before. Charles Barber was appointed to the position in late January 1880 and held it until his death in 1917.

This is the first use of the portrait of a president who was in office at the time the Assay medal was issued and marks a radical departure from earlier practice. It was reduced from the model for the regular presidential medal, PR-19.

AC-21

1880 (Mule)



Obverse: Reverse of preceding (AC-20) medal.

Reverse: Ornate lettering ANNUAL ASSAY 1880 within stylized borders.

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: Charles E. Barber (obverse)

a) Silver b) Copper

This medal appears to be nothing more than a mule struck to satisfy a collector's whim for something unusual but it is possible that the rather plain reverse had been worked up for something else and then laid aside for possible Assay medal use.

AC-22

1880 (Pattern)



Obverse: Same die as obverse of AC-20.

Reverse: Bearded man seated to left in medieval assay laboratory. Inscription **IGNIS PROBABIT OPUS** [*FIRE WILL TEST THE WORK*] in exergue. M on exergual line to right.

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: George Morgan

a) Silver b) Copper

This unadopted pattern, by special engraver George Morgan, may have been his entry in the race for position of chief engraver. Although of high artistic quality, it is clearly inferior, at least in this one instance, to the work of Charles E. Barber. On February 2, 1880, Morgan was appointed assistant engraver. He was to become chief engraver only in 1917 on the death of Barber. Morgan then served until his death in January 1925.

The reverse inscription refers to the method of testing the purity of a metallic composition by melting the whole and then analyzing the parts. It refers in particular to the methods of testing the ingots used for coinage and the safeguards employed against fraudulent substitution of base metals.

AC-23

1880 (Reverse of 1868)

Obverse: Similar to that of 1870, with W.B. at lower right. No inscription in exergue.

Reverse: ANNUAL ASSAY 1880 within an open wreath, the same wreath as used on the Assay medal of 1868.

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: William Barber

a) Copper

As there would seem to have been little point in making a pattern for this year using an old hub of William Barber's, it is possible that this obverse and reverse had been prepared prior to his death in the latter part of 1879. A few then might have been made in February or March of 1880 for the everpresent official collectors within the walls of the Philadelphia Mint.

AC-24a

1881



Obverse: Similar to that of 1880 (AC-20 and AC-22) except for date of 1881.

Reverse: Liberty and Justice in front of a coining press. **NE QUID DETRIMENTI RESPUBLICA CAPIAT** [*LET NOT THE STATE RECEIVE ANY HARM*] in exergue. Letters C.E.B. at lower left.

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: George Morgan (obverse) and William Barber (reverse)

a) Silver* b) Copper

On February 7, 1881, thirty silver Assay medals were struck (average weight 16.66 grams) but three were later returned and melted. The reverse, by Chief Engraver Charles E. Barber, is again an artistic work of note, though not as good as his effort for the Assay medal of 1880.

The Latin legend on the reverse refers to the debate in the Roman Senate over the Cataline conspiracy. It is a quotation from the famed orator Cicero who was appealing for emergency powers to deal with the conspirators. It was intended to mean, in a modern context, that the people should receive no harm from dishonest Mint officials.

There exists an alternate reverse with the initial B instead of C.E.B. Because of the rarity of the variety with initial B, it is believed that the reverse with initials C.E.B. was used for the medal distributed to the commissioners. It is possible that, due to breakage of one die, another was hurriedly made and both kinds distributed. It is known that the C.E.B. variety exists in both silver and copper; the variety with the letter B is known only in copper.

AC-24b

1881

Obverse: As preceding.

Reverse: As preceding except for letter B at lower left.

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: As preceding.

a) Copper

See discussion for AC-24a above.



Obverse: Bust of President James A. Garfield to left with legend THE MINT OF THE UNITED STATES ANNUAL ASSAY 1882.

Reverse: Robed woman in classical dress instructing youth in use of scales beneath legend LIBRA PROBAT OPUS [THE SCALES VERIFY THE WEIGHT (OF THE COINS)]. Bust of Pallas to lower right in frame.

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: Charles Barber (obverse) and George Morgan (reverse)

a) Silver b) Copper*

The obverse bust of President Garfield is reduced from the regular presidential medal by Charles Barber (PR-20) while the reverse is an entirely new design by Morgan. It is, however, reminiscent of the Barber design found on AC-20 of 1880. This new reverse vignette was used again in later years and was the direct inspiration, though in mirror image, for the reverse of the 1920 Manila Mint medal. For quality and intricacy of work this reverse, in the opinion of the authors, is one of the best in the entire series of Assay medals.

This is the only Assay medal which honors a president immediately deceased; Garfield had been assassinated in 1881.

Coiner's records show only that two silver Assay medals were struck on February 14, 1882, with an average weight of 16.17 grams.

Note: in the original TAMS catalogue the engravers were reversed for the two sides.

AC-26

1883



Obverse: Bust of President Chester A. Arthur to left with legend THE MINT OF THE UNITED STATES ANNUAL ASSAY 1883.

Reverse: As preceding reverse of 1882. The same die.

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: George Morgan

a) Silver b) Copper*

The bust of Chester A. Arthur is not a reduction from the regular presidential or Indian Peace visages by C.E. Barber as neither of those medal dies was finished prior to the summer of 1883. It was the first medal to be struck in the Mint bearing Arthur's portrait; the engraver is not absolutely certainly, since it is not signed, but the Mint catalogue of 1914 credits it to Morgan.

On February 16, 1883, Superintendent A. Loudon Snowden wrote concerning this medal and mentioned that only one silver specimen had been struck, and that for presentation to the President. The coiner's records, however, show two silver Assay medals being struck in the calendar year, although nowhere is the actual date on the medal stated. The first was reported on February 16 (20.84 grams) and is no doubt the piece mentioned by Snowden. The second was struck on July 21 and weighed much less, only 15.55 grams.

Superintendent Snowden sent, on September 14, 1883, an Assay medal of this year to Director Burchard in Washington; the metal was not stated. It was meant for a Professor Hilgard. Snowden noted in passing that it had "not been customary" to restrike such medals and that the piece was the only one on hand.

AC-27

1884



Obverse: As obverse of 1883 (AC-26) except for date of 1884.

Reverse: As reverse of 1882. The same die

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: George Morgan

a) Silver b) Copper*

On February 20, 1884, Superintendent Snowden sent Director Burchard the last Assay medal on hand; it was noted in the letter that only one silver specimen had been struck. No mention of any silver medal was found in the coiner's records, however.

It is believed that copper-bronzed restrikes were made of this date. Some of the copper pieces were later silver-plated (probably outside the Mint) and the collector should be careful in purchasing a silver medal of this date.



Obverse: As obverse of 1883, except for date of 1885.

Reverse: As reverse of 1882.

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: George Morgan

a) Silver b) Copper* c) Aluminum

Four silver medals, with an average weight of 20.37 grams, were recorded by the coiner as having been struck in February. An unknown number of bronze restrikes were made in later years (probably after 1900) with these dies. Two of the later strikes are in the Smithsonian collection. One specimen has been seen with doubling on the obverse lettering, the result of a loose die.



Obverse: Bust of President Grover Cleveland to right within legend reading THE MINT OF THE UNITED STATES ANNUAL ASSAY 1886.

Reverse: Justice, with blazing lamp aloft, in front of the Philadelphia Mint building and beneath legend JUSTITIAE LAMPAS MONETAE ALLUCET [THE TORCH OF HONESTY SHINES ON THE COINAGE].

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: Charles E. Barber (obverse) and George Morgan (reverse)

a) Copper

The obverse bust is a reduced copy of the regular presidential medal (PR-23) finished by Barber in the summer of 1885. Harold P. Newlin, a noted collector and numismatic author, tried in January 1886 to obtain a gold strike of the 1886 Assay medal, in exchange for a rare Assay pattern of 1880 (probably AC-23), in addition to paying the cost of the gold. This was refused by Superintendent Snowden, who pointed out that these medals were never struck in gold.

The attribution to Morgan for the reverse die is based on the 1914 Mint catalogue.

AC-30

1887



Obverse: As obverse of preceding, except for date of 1887.

Reverse: Similar to preceding, but not the same die.

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: Charles E. Barber (obverse) and George Morgan (reverse)

a) Copper

The fiscal 1887 die report shows two dies for the Assay medals which may mean than an 1887 Assay medal exists with an alternate reverse or obverse. According to the Dreyfuss Sale (Bowers & Merena, 1986, lot 5035) the rays of the reverse of the 1887 medal are slightly different than those of 1886; on the latter medal a ray at right center touches a cornice while on 1887 it does not. It is possible that 1887 medals exist with the reverse of 1886.

AC-31

1888



Obverse: Bust to right with legend GROVER CLEVELAND. Beneath truncation: C.E BARBER F.

Reverse: MINT OF THE UNITED STATES ASSAY COMMISSION 1888 within a laurel wreath.

Size: 76 mm

Engraver: Charles E. Barber

a) Copper

Thirty cases for Assay medals were purchased at \$1.25 each, much more than the thirty cents paid in 1879. The obverse of this medal is the regular presidential die (PR-23) while the reverse wreath is from the same medal. Earlier, however, the wreath had been used on the medals for Director Burchard (MT-7) and President William Henry Harrison (PR-7). It is assumed that Barber did the reverse wreath on the grounds that he was responsible for the Burchard obverse.

AC-32

1889



Obverse: As preceding Assay medal of 1888; same die.

Reverse: As preceding medal except for date of 1889.

Size: 76 mm

Engraver: Charles E. Barber

a) Copper

AC-33

1890



Obverse: Bust to left with legends BENJAMIN HARRISON in the field and MINT OF THE UNITED STATES ANNUAL ASSAY 1890 around.

Reverse: Design first used in 1882 but with sprig of laurel added to the exergue. Beaded border.

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: Charles E. Barber (obverse) and George Morgan (reverse)

a) Silver* b) Copper

The obverse bust is reduced from the regular presidential medal (PR-24) for Harrison. Twenty-six Assay medal cases were purchased from Knecht and Boyer; twenty-five in leather for one dollar each and one in velvet for \$1.35. Presumably the latter was meant for presentation to the President.

AC-34

1891



Obverse: Bust to right with legends WILLIAM WINDOM in the field and THE MINT OF THE UNITED STATES. ANNUAL ASSAY 1891 around.

Reverse: Bearded man conducting an assay beneath legend SCIENTIA CORONAT OPUS [*KNOWLEDGE CROWNS THE WORK*].

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: Charles E. Barber (obverse) and George Morgan (reverse)

a) Silver b) Copper

This is the medal passed out to the Assay Commissioners in February 1891. As Treasury Secretary Windom died on January 29, 1891, the decision to use this obverse must have been a hasty one; the bust is reduced from the regular Windom medal (MT-25) executed in December 1890. The 1891 fiscal die account does not agree with the three dies known to have been prepared for this and the following medal. The attribution to Morgan for the reverse is based on the 1914 Mint catalogue.

AC-35

1891

Obverse: Similar to obverse of 1890 except for date 1891.

Reverse: As preceding medal, AC-34.

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: Charles E. Barber (obverse) and George Morgan (reverse)

a) Copper

These dies were probably prepared in late 1890 or early 1891, prior to the death of William Windom. The only medal located at present is in the Pittman collection.

AC-36

1892



Obverse: Bust to left with legend BENJAMIN HARRISON.

Reverse: Vignette of 1882 with legend MINT OF THE UNITED STATES ANNUAL ASSAY. Date of 1892 in exergue.

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: George Morgan

a) Silver b) Copper

Twenty-five medal cases were purchased on February 8. Superintendent Oliver C. Bosbyshell wrote Andrew Mason, of the New York Assay Office, that the 1892 Assay medal dies were broken but that he was taking steps to have them repaired. On March 23 Mason was sent one medal, presumably in copper-bronzed finish. The dies are still in existence and are known to have been used for restriking as late as 1907. One silver medal was restruck in 1906 while a bronze medal was made in 1907.

The obverse bust of the President, while similar to those on the regular presidential and Indian Peace medals, was apparently done especially for this medal; it may be a rejected design by Morgan for the presidential series and the attribution is thus tentative.

The ANS collection contains a brass uniface of the obverse with the numeral '2' punched into the reverse.

AC-37

1893



Obverse: Similar to 1892 except for change of date to 1893 and alteration of portrait. Legend THE MINT OF THE UNITED STATES ANNUAL ASSAY 1893.

Reverse: Justice, with Great Seal of the United States at left, holding scales to test the coinage. Mint facade at lower right. Legend FIDEM REIPUBLICAE UT SERVEM [*IN ORDER THAT I MAY BE TRUE TO THE REPUBLIC*].

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: George Morgan

a) Silver b) Copper c) Aluminum

In the Dreyfuss Collection catalogue (lot 5044), Q. David Bowers notes that there is an obverse die break (which "begins at the border, extends through the first T of STATES, through the shoulder, then ends on the bottom of the lapel") on the bronze and aluminum pieces, but not on the silver in the sale. The ANS collection contains a lead striking in very poor condition.

AC-38

1894



Obverse: Similar to AC-29 except for changed date of 1894.

Reverse: Woman in classical dress (chiton and peplos) holds up weight for nude cherub, carrying a basket of weights, before her. She is holding a needle in her left hand. In the exergue is the incuse inscription REM ACU [(YOU HAVE TOUCHED) THE MATTER WITH A NEEDLE].

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: Charles E. Barber (obverse) and George Morgan (reverse)

a) Silver b) Copper

The Latin word TETIGISTI [YOU HAVE TOUCHED] is understood in the context of the inscription. The vignette on the reverse shows the woman returning a weight to the cherub after using it to check the accuracy of the coinage. The reverse inscription refers to the ancient method of testing the fineness of silver and gold by the touchstone method.

The ANS has a set of obverse and reverse uniface strikes of this date with the numeral '4' appearing raised and incuse on the blank sides. The purpose of the numeral being punched in this way was to seat the two sides together in the proper alignment.

AC-39

1895



Obverse: Same die as AC-31.

Reverse: Similar to reverse of AC-31 except for date of 1895.

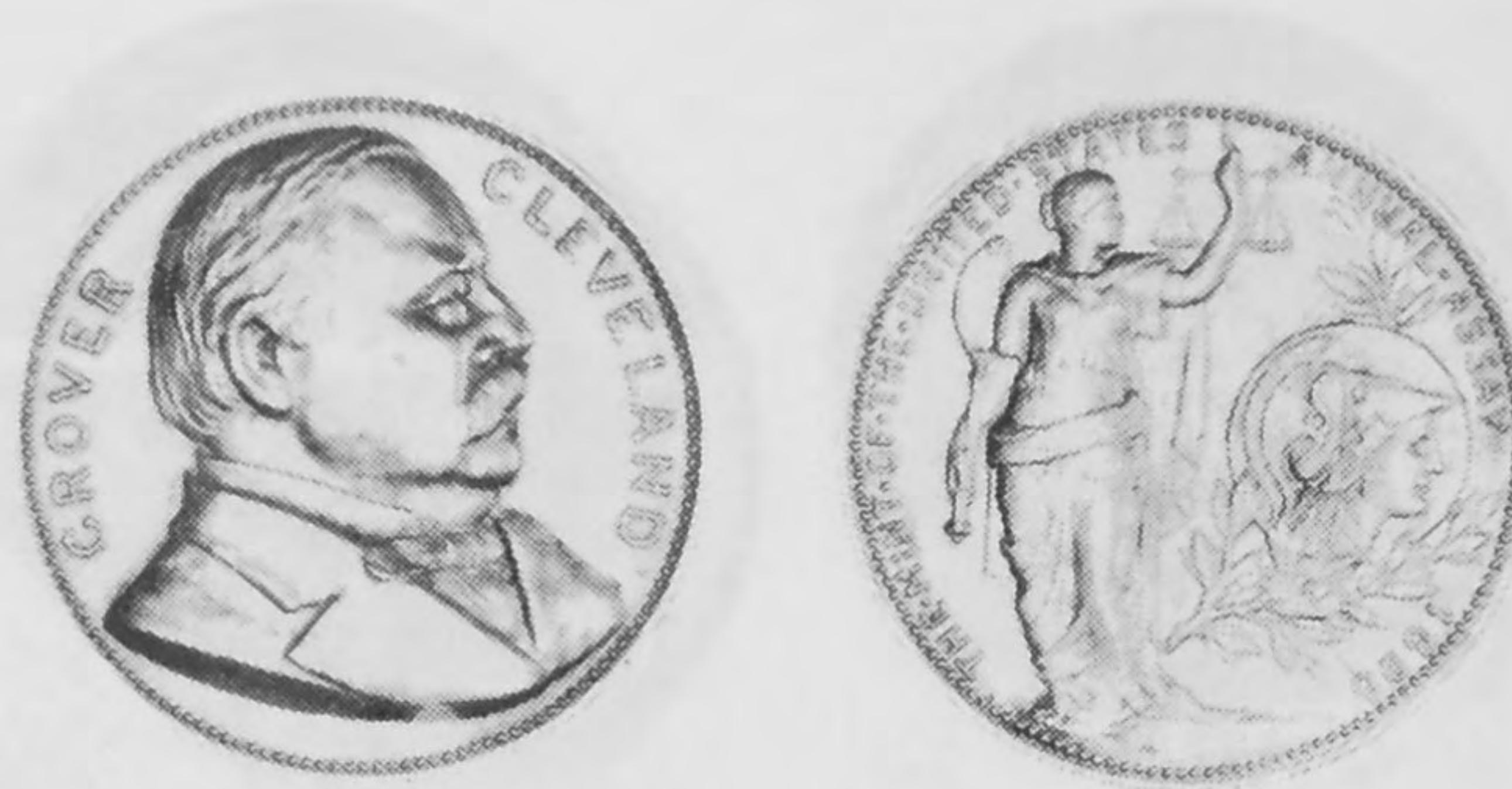
Size: 76 mm

Engraver: Charles E. Barber

a) Copper

AC-40

1896



Obverse: Bust of the President to right with legend GROVER CLEVELAND. Beaded border. Lettering is modelled rather than punched.

Reverse: Legend THE MINT OF THE UNITED STATES ANNUAL ASSAY 1896 around ornate vignette of woman in classical pose, wearing a chiton, and holding up a pair of scales with her left hand; to the right a helmeted head of Pallas facing right, in the form of a Greek coin. Olive branch below.

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: Charles E. Barber (obverse) and George Morgan (reverse)

a) Silver* b) Copper

The 1896 fiscal year report shows thirty-five silver Assay medals struck. One 1896 silver is recorded in the report for 1898. Another silver medal was restruck in 1906. Beginning in 1896 the silver medals were issued for several years by the Mint with a special blue toning, achieved by chemical means after striking.

AC-41

1897



Obverse: Similar to preceding (AC-40) except for minor die differences, notably the absence of a beaded border and a slightly different bust.

Reverse: Similar to preceding except for date and other minor changes, mostly in the lettering style. Beaded border of 1896 missing.

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: Charles E. Barber (obverse) and George Morgan (reverse)

a) Silver* b) Copper

The 1897 fiscal report shows thirty silver and seven bronze medals struck. One silver medal was restruck in 1906 while a bronze is recorded for 1907.

AC-42

1898



Obverse: Bust of President to left with legend WILLIAM McKINLEY. Signed C. E. BARBER F. Beaded border.

Reverse: MINT OF THE UNITED STATES ANNUAL ASSAY above ornate scene with bust of Pallas (on a fluted column in the form of a fasces) flanked by Justice on the left and a skilled workman on the right. She has scales in her left hand and an olive branch in her right while the man has tools of his trade and plans in his hands. The date of 1898 is in the exergue. Letter M on truncation line.

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: Charles E. Barber (obverse) and George Morgan (reverse)

a) Silver* b) Copper c) White metal

The vignette seems to show a skilled workman (who symbolized the men striking the coins) being checked for accuracy by the woman in classical garb. Pallas watches over her work. The workman may also have the second meaning of representing work then underway on the new Mint in Philadelphia; it opened in 1901. Specimens in white metal for this period were probably die proofs for official inspection.

AC-43

1899



Obverse: As preceding medal; same die.

Reverse: Bust of Pallas in Corinthian helmet to left above scales and eagle, the whole partially or completely enclosed by a wreath of olive branches. Portion of United States shield forms central background inside wreath. Legend above UNITED STATES MINT ANNUAL ASSAY 1899.

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: Charles E. Barber (obverse) and George Morgan (reverse)

a) Silver* b) Copper c) White metal

The annual fiscal report shows forty silver and ten bronze medals struck for 1899. A poorly-preserved lead die trial is in the ANS collection.

AC-44

1900



Obverse: As preceding medal; same die.

Reverse: Vignette of 1893 with legend UNITED STATES MINT ANNUAL ASSAY 1900.

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: Charles E. Barber (obverse) and George Morgan (reverse)

a) Silver* b) Copper

Mint reports show that forty silver and six copper medals were struck in the fiscal year 1900. One 1900 silver medal was reported struck in 1906. The ANS collection has a set of brass uniface specimens with the raised and incuse letter 'T' on the blank sides.

AC-45

1901



Obverse: Bust to left with WILLIAM MCKINLEY above and PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES below.

Reverse: Modern workman examining metal in an assay furnace; tools in background. Similar to reverse of 1891. Legend MINT OF THE UNITED STATES ANNUAL ASSAY 1901.

Size: 40 x 57 mm (plaque)

Engraver: Charles E. Barber (obverse) and George Morgan (reverse)

a) Silver* b) Copper

The annual report shows forty silver medals being struck. The silver is in the new style (post-1900) matte finish. Real bronze medals (as opposed to copper-bronzed of the old type) were first struck at the Mint in 1901; it is assumed that the metal for 1901 is copper and not bronze. The 1905 report shows one additional silver medal restruck, as does the 1906 report. A bronze medal was restruck in 1907. The ANS collection has a pair of uniface brass specimens with raised numbers on the blank sides.

The bust of the President on this medal was also used, with slight changes, for the official 1901 Inaugural medal. One modification was the removal of a Union army decoration from the lapel in order to encourage sales of the medal in the South.

AC-46

1902



Obverse: Female figure holding up a blazing torch (as on the medal of 1887) with the new Philadelphia Mint building in the background. Rays much shorter than before. Legend, partly in exergue, FIRST MEETING OF ASSAY COMMISSION IN THE NEW MINT.

Reverse: Similar to that used in 1899 but with minor changes, including date.

Size: 33 mm

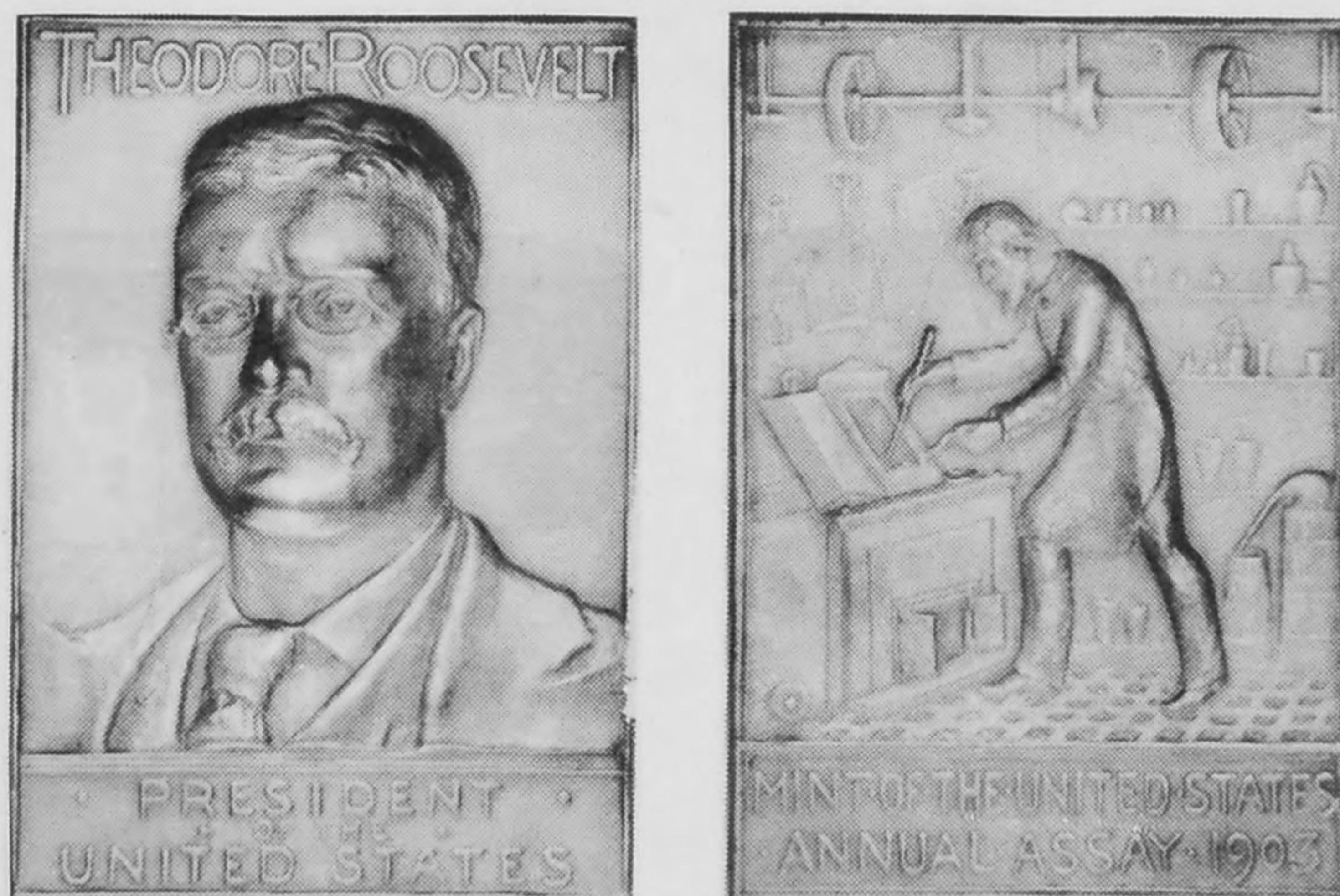
Engraver: George Morgan

a) Silver* b) Bronze

The annual Mint report shows forty silver (delivered on January 17) and two bronze medals struck. An additional silver medal was restruck in 1906 while a bronze was made in 1907. The ANS collection has a set of brass uniface specimens with the numeral '3' raised and incuse on the blank sides.

AC-47

1903



Obverse: Facing bust with THEODORE ROOSEVELT above and PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES below. To lower right letter M.

Reverse: Similar to that used for 1901 except for date of 1903.

Size: 40 x 57 mm (plaque)

Engraver: George Morgan

a) Silver* b) Bronze

The number of medals reported in the annual Mint report for 1903 is forty silver and two bronze, the same as for the preceding year. However, the medal book shows forty-three silver specimens delivered on February 10. One additional silver medal was struck in 1906.

AC-48

1904



Obverse: Bust to left with THEODORE ROOSEVELT above and PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES below. Unsigned.

Reverse: MINT OF THE UNITED STATES ANNUAL ASSAY 1904 with Treasury seal (surmounted by an eagle) in upper left; olive branch below.

Size: 40 x 57 mm (plaque)

Engraver: George Morgan

a) Silver* b) Bronze

The printed Mint report does not mention the Assay medals but the coiner's book shows forty silver delivered on February 11. The only other records so far found are one silver medal struck in 1906 and one bronze in 1907. The ANS collection has a set of brass uniface specimens.

AC-49

1905



Obverse: As preceding except for initial M to lower right.

Reverse: As preceding except for date 1905 and initial M in lower right corner.

Size: 40 x 57 mm (plaque)

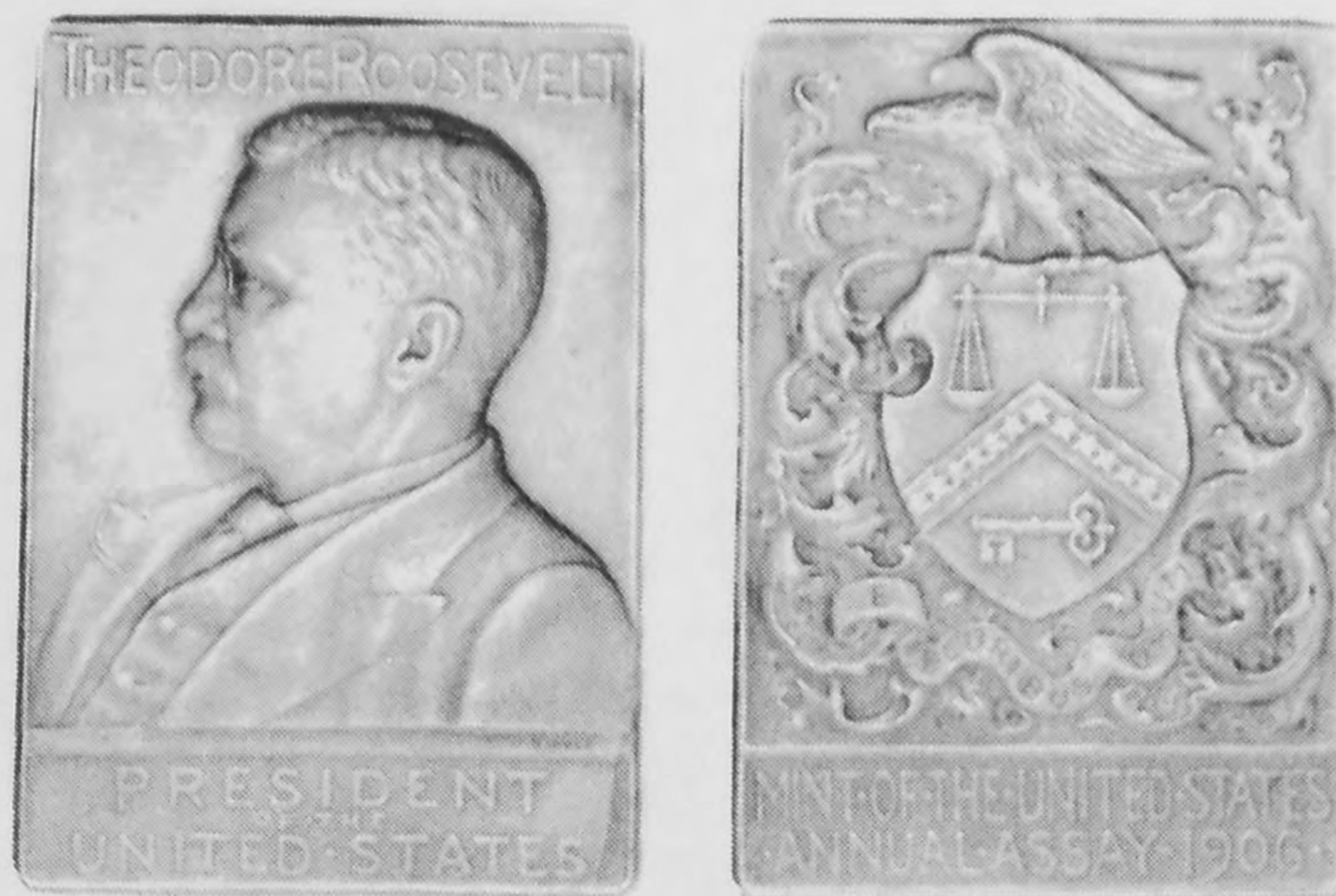
Engraver: George Morgan

a) Silver* b) Bronze

Medal department records show only that ten silver medals (delivered on March 2, well after the annual meeting) were struck in 1905. In 1906 another silver and bronze were reported.

AC-50

1906



Obverse: Similar to preceding (AC-49) but from slightly different die, the major variation being the larger letters below the portrait. On exergual line at lower right: BARBER.

Reverse: Treasury seal surmounted by an eagle, the whole within a scroll pattern. E PLURIBUS UNUM directly below the shield and MINT OF THE UNITED STATES ANNUAL ASSAY 1906 in exergue. MORGAN to lower right.

Size: 40 x 55 mm (plaque)

Engraver: Charles E. Barber (obverse) and George Morgan (reverse)

a) Silver* b) Bronze

Fifty-six silver and four bronze medals were struck in 1906; an additional bronze was made in 1907. Die trials exist for 1906. One collector has reported that the 1906 obverse exists with a 1905 reverse; the medal was stolen some years ago and cannot be confirmed at present. The medals of 1906-1908 are thicker than those of surrounding years.

AC-51

1907



Obverse: As preceding; same die.

Reverse: Similar to preceding except for change of date to 1907.

Size: 40 x 55 mm (plaque)

Engraver: Charles E. Barber (obverse) and George Morgan (reverse)

a) Silver* b) Bronze

Forty silver medals were delivered on February 8, with an additional fifteen on the twenty-sixth of that month. The only notation for a bronze medal delivered was on March 14, well after the Commission had met. The Pittman collection contains bronze uniface specimens for obverse and reverse while the ANS collection has one for the reverse.

AC-52

1908



Obverse: As preceding; same die.

Reverse: Similar to preceding except for date 1908.

Size: 40 x 55 mm (plaque)

Engraver: Charles E. Barber (obverse) and George Morgan (reverse)

a) Silver* b) Bronze

Fifty-five silver medals were delivered on February 17, 1908.

AC-53

1909



Obverse: Bust to right with GEORGE B CORTELYOU above and, in exergue, SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY. Letter M on truncation.

Reverse: Similar to that used in 1905 (AC-49) except for 1909 date.

Size: 40 x 57 mm (plaque)

Engraver: George Morgan

a) Silver b) Bronze*

Unlike most of the Assay medal dies, the obverse was used for many years (though not since 1985 when the Mint stopped striking a considerable number of older medals) to strike a uniface portrait plaque of Cortelyou for sale to collectors. In the 1960s, by error, some of these pieces were struck with the original reverse and sold to the public; the restrikes are said to be more softly struck. The number so made and sold is not known but the finish differs from that in use during 1909. The collector should beware buying this medal in bronze unless fully authenticated by an expert. Fifty-one bronze and two silver medals were struck for the Assay Commission in 1909. There is a long-standing rumor of a gold specimen.

AC-54

1910



Obverse: Bust to right with legend WILLIAM H TAFT PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES. Behind neck: BARBER.

Reverse: Two genii seated vis-a-vis, and holding between them a tablet surmounted by an eagle; date of 1910 on the tablet. Below, a scroll inscribed E PLURIBUS UNUM. Legend MINT OF THE UNITED STATES ANNUAL ASSAY. Signed MORGAN below scroll.

Size: 45 mm

Engraver: Charles E. Barber (obverse) and George Morgan (reverse)

a) **Bronze**

The reverse die is done in the new art nouveau style which became popular early in this century. Fifty bronze medals were delivered on January 26.

AC-55

1911



Obverse: As preceding; same die.

Reverse: Similar to preceding except for 1911 date.

Size: 45 mm

Engraver: Charles E. Barber (obverse) and George Morgan (reverse)

a) **Silver*** b) **Bronze**

Twenty silver medals were delivered on February 22. Regulations were tightened at this time to prevent wholesale distribution of medals. It is of interest to note that the experimentation which characterized the administration of Theodore Roosevelt (and earlier presidents) is lacking in the Taft years with a stereotyped reverse remaining unchanged.

AC-56

1912



Obverse: As preceding; same die.

Reverse: Similar to preceding except for 1912 date.

Size: 45 mm

Engraver: Charles E. Barber (obverse) and George Morgan (reverse)

a) Silver* b) Bronze

February 7, 1912, saw the delivery of twenty-five silver medals.

AC-57

1913



Obverse: As preceding; same die.

Reverse: Similar to preceding except for 1913 date.

Size: 45 mm

Engraver: Charles E. Barber (obverse) and George Morgan (reverse)

a) Bronze

There were twenty-five bronze medals delivered on Feb 11. This is the most commonly-seen medal of the period 1910-1913.

AC-58

1914



Obverse: Bust to left with legend WOODROW WILSON. On truncation: C.E. BARBER.

Reverse: Eagle surmounting a tablet inscribed with date 1914. Scales below. Ornamental bands for inscription MINT OF THE UNITED STATES ANNUAL ASSAY. Oak leaves around tablet. To lower right: MORGAN.

Size: 45 mm

Engraver: Charles E. Barber (obverse) and George Morgan (reverse)

a) Silver* b) Bronze

Twenty-five silver medals are recorded under date of February 2.

AC-59

1915



Obverse: United States Treasury Seal with legend THESAVRI AMERICAE SEPTENTRIONALIS SIGILLVM [*SEAL OF THE TREASURY OF NORTH AMERICA*].

Reverse: Similar to reverse of 1914 except for 1915 date and M.

Size: 45 mm

Engraver: George Morgan

a) Silver* b) Bronze

Records show twenty-one silver medals delivered on February 6. Commissioners' names were first engraved on the edge of medals in 1915, according to specimens seen by the authors. This is the most difficult date to obtain prior to 1936.

AC-60

1916



Obverse: As preceding; same die.

Reverse: Similar to 1910 (AC-54) except for 1916 date and letter M instead of MORGAN.

Size: 45 mm

Engraver: George Morgan

a) Silver* b) Bronze

Twenty-five silver medals were delivered on February 2, 1916; another two were produced on February 9.

AC-61

1917



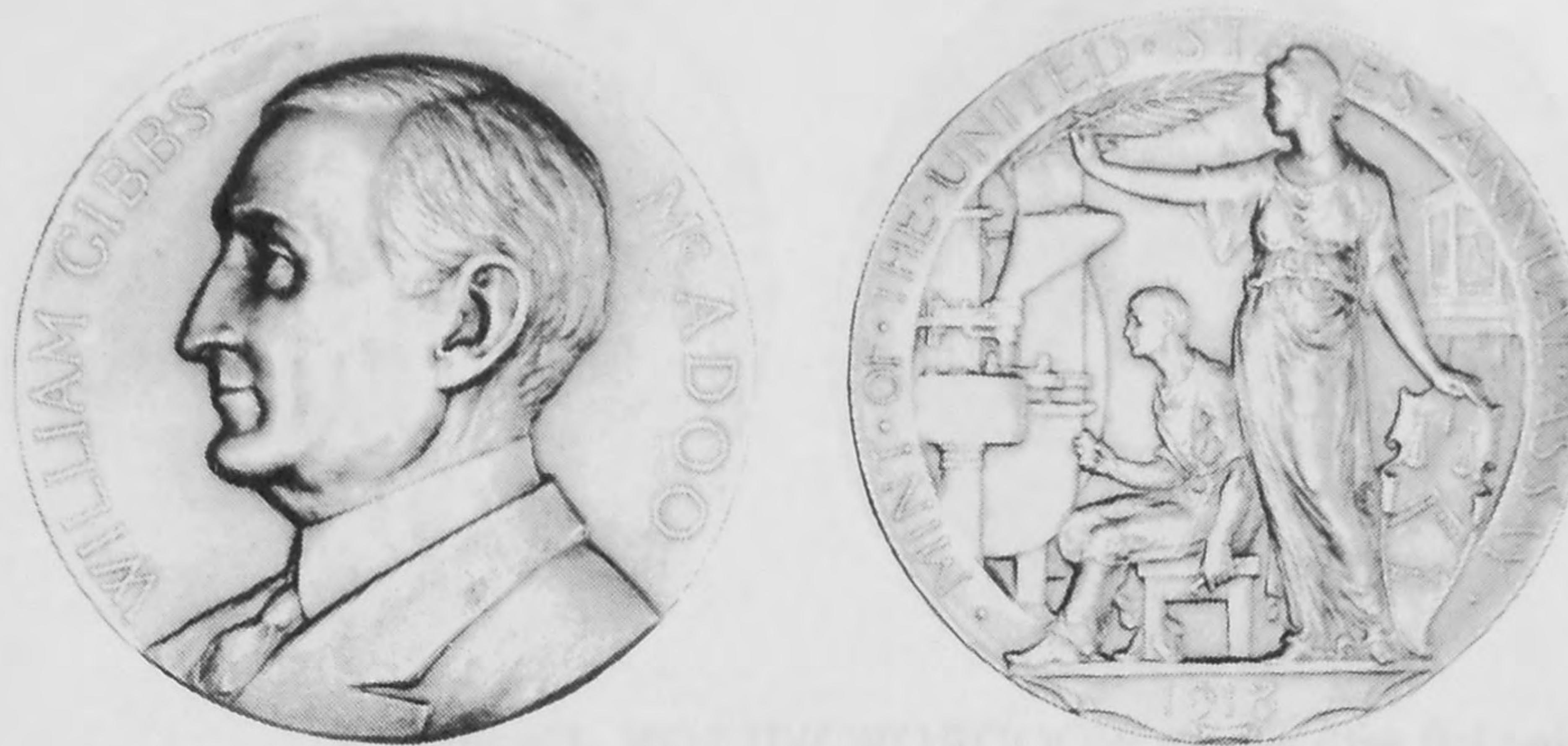
Obverse: As preceding; same die.

Reverse: Similar to preceding except for change of date to 1917. Unsigned.

Size: 45 mm

Engraver: George Morgan

a) Bronze



Obverse: Bust to left with legend WILLIAM GIBBS McADOO. Unsigned.

Reverse: Woman in classical dress (probably Juno Moneta) to right holding palm branch in right hand and scroll inscribed with Treasury Department Seal in left hand. In background, workman preparing to install die in coining press; scales in case at upper right. Legend MINT OF THE UNITED STATES ANNUAL ASSAY 1918. Unsigned.

Size: 51 mm

Engraver: George Morgan (obverse) and John R. Sinnock (reverse)

a) Bronze

Treasury Secretary McAdoo, who had presidential ambitions, was the son-in-law of President Wilson and this medal may be viewed in that light; the reverse is one of the best for the period. The Rogers Fred collection has an aluminum trial piece.

The Mint Bureau, in a rare lapse of judgement, sent out the letters notifying the commissioners (of their formal appointment by the President to the Commission) in a franked Treasury envelope marked "Printed Matter." Joseph O'Neill, of Boston, received his on the 12th of February and took the night train to Philadelphia, arriving while the Commission was in session.

Another commissioner, Calvin Page of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, did not receive his until well after the appointed time and there was a spate of letter writing. Page was a loyal supporter of President Wilson, as well as an influential one, and took offense at getting "Printed Matter." He did receive one of the medals, however, and a promise of strong consideration for the following year's Commission. (He was appointed the following year.)

This is the first Assay Commission medal done by Sinnock.

AC-63

1919



Obverse: Bust facing left with legend WOODROW WILSON. Unsigned.

Reverse: Mercury holding caduceus in right hand and cape in left. To left of figure is an adaptation of an archaic Greek coin showing the head of a lion. Incuse legend MINT OF THE UNITED STATES ANNUAL ASSAY 1919; miniature Treasury seals at sides of date. Monogram JRS below Greek coin.

Size: 51 mm

Engraver: George Morgan (obverse) and John R. Sinnock (reverse)

a) Bronze

The ancient Greek coin appears to be from Cnidus in Asia Minor or Leontini in Sicily, although there are changes which make a precise attribution impossible. Bronze uniface strikings of the reverse exist in the Brail, Fred, Keusch, Pittman, and Salisbury collections.

AC-64

1920



Obverse: As preceding; same die.

Reverse: Goddess of Victory with sword in right hand and olive branch in left seated on marble bench labelled VICTORY and PEACE. Legend MINT OF THE UNITED STATES ANNUAL ASSAY. Date 1920 in exergue. Letter M to lower right.

Size: 51 mm

Engraver: George Morgan

a) Bronze

This is the Assay Medal equivalent of the Peace dollar struck from 1921 to 1935. Thirty bronze medals were ordered on February 12 and delivered on February 17 but this cannot be all that were struck. Apparently the high quality of the design, especially on the reverse, led to numerous requests for this medal and it was restruck (perhaps another forty or fifty pieces) in the summer or fall of 1920. The reverse is in much higher relief than is normal for the period.



Obverse: As preceding; same die.

Reverse: Goddess (Juno Moneta ?) to left with scroll held in both hands. Scales to right above. Inscription MINT OF THE UNITED STATES ANNUAL ASSAY 1921. Ribbon and laurel (surmounted by Great Seal) to lower right for artistic balance. Letter M at lower right.

Size: 51 mm

Engraver: George Morgan

a) Gold b) Bronze

The gold medal was struck for President Wilson at the expense of the Assay Commissioners as a mark of respect. According to Mint records, it weighed exactly 2 ounces, indicating a very thin planchet.

It is well known that the illness of the President had seriously impeded normal governmental operations and it is likely that the Mint and Treasury officials felt it safer to use the 1920 obverse rather than another, thus avoiding charges of political preference.



Obverse: Bust to left with legend ANDREW W. MELLON. Letter M on truncation.

Reverse: Defiant eagle on crossed branches of oak and olive. Symbols of Treasury in field. Legend MINT OF THE UNITED STATES ANNUAL ASSAY. Date 1922 at lower right.

Size: 51 mm

Engraver: George Morgan

a) Bronze

Collectors of commemorative coins sometimes include this piece with their collections because of the association with Morgan and the Illinois half dollar. The reverse motif was repeated on the 1943 medal.

The obverse of the medal is a reduced version of the Treasury Secretary medal for Mellon, which was sold to the public; the current version is a later revision of the portrait by John R. Sinnock. The smaller Mint medals of the period with this general design carry the letter M on the reverse.

Mellon received a measure of numismatic unpopularity when he refused to accept the Washington quarter dollar design by Laura Gardin Fraser in 1932, despite the Commission of Fine Arts choosing it over all other entries. He chose instead the inferior Flanagan work, still in use.



Obverse: Bust to left with legend WARREN G. HARDING. To lower right: MORGAN.

Reverse: Torch, with lower part in the form of a fasces, serving as fulcrum for scales. MINT OF THE UNITED STATES ANNUAL ASSAY 1923 below with THESAURI AMERICAE SEPTENTRIONALIS SIGILLUM [*SEAL OF THE TREASURY OF NORTH AMERICA*] above. Semicircle of eagles and shields below Treasury legend.

Size: 51 mm

Engraver: George Morgan

a) Silver b) Bronze*

The only record of silver found was for one medal under date of April 9. It is curious, from a political viewpoint, that Mellon would precede the President on the Assay Commission medals. The 1924 reverse, as well as others from the 1920s, uses the Latin V for the letter U but this has no numismatic significance.



Obverse: CALVIN COOLIDGE around bust to right. MORGAN on truncation.

Reverse: Facing eagle with tablet reading 1924 on breast. Legend MINT OF THE UNITED STATES ANNUAL ASSAY. Small Treasury Department shields serve as word dividers at lower left and right.

Size: 51 mm

Engraver: George Morgan

a) Bronze

Mint Director Grant had a 1924 medal sent to him in late January in order to pass on the design. It was duly approved on January 26. So far as is known, this was an isolated practice.

There was a dispute in December 1924 over the payment of certain Assay Commission expenses which illustrates very well the contemporary practices. A.H. Vestal of Washington, D.C., one of the 1924 commissioners, had duly submitted his bill for travel, lodging, and meals. However, the Treasury had refused to pay the bill because Vestal had used a taxi (\$1.80) to get to and from the Mint and this was disallowed on the grounds that regulations of March 29, 1922, paragraph 23, indicated that "in accordance with travel regulations . . . the use of taxicabs when streetcars are available is not authorized in absence of the showing of a necessity for such service." Vestal was reimbursed for his round-trip train fare (\$16.80), meals (\$6.00), and hotel (\$8.00), however.

AC-69

1925



Obverse: Similar to obverse of 1924 (AC-68) but revised portrait in slightly lower relief. Letter M on truncation. Lettering closer to rim.

Reverse: Eagle in front of ornate portal with UNITED STATES MINT ANNUAL ASSAY above and 1925 in exergue below. Caduceus on either side of portal. Treasury Seal above eagle's head.

Size: 51 mm

Engraver: George Morgan

a) Bronze

On January 30 thirty bronze medals were ordered but this was later raised to fifty. Delivery came on February 14. The same eagle had been used on an earlier Morgan medal - for President Harding in 1921 - as well as the silver dollar of 1878-1921.

The revised portrait was due to a request from the President that his features be shown in a different light. Morgan's first work, he thought, showed him too heavy in the face and he wanted a much thinner visage. There was considerable discussion and correspondence in the spring of 1924 between Washington and Philadelphia on this point.



Obverse: CALVIN COOLIDGE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES around bust to right. SINNOCK. SC. on truncation.

Reverse: Seated woman preparing to weigh coins on scale. Partial Treasury Seal above with legend MINT OF THE UNITED STATES ANNUAL ASSAY 1926. In exergue: PHILADELPHIA. Sinnock monogram in right field.

Size: 51 mm

Engraver: John R. Sinnock

a) Bronze

The reverse of the medal is done in low relief, a hallmark of the late 1920s and 1930s. The medals were also much easier to strike in low relief, but the overriding reason was the artistic standards of the period. On February 1 fifty bronze medals were ordered and these were delivered February 12. Twelve uniface bronze medals were delivered on May 1, according to the "U.S. Mint Ledger. Authorization for Manufacture of Bronze Medals, Coiner's Office. March 12, 1924 to February 8, 1944." Coolidge was still dissatisfied with his portrait, thus the new one by Sinnock.

AC-71

1927



Obverse: As preceding; same die.

Reverse: Mercury with cornucopia of agricultural products. Inscriptions MINT OF THE UNITED STATES ANNUAL ASSAY 1927, and NATIONAL PROSPERITY. Treasury Seal behind figure of Mercury. Sinnock's monogram in left field.

Size: 51 mm

Engraver: John R. Sinnock

a) **Bronze**

Fifty bronze medals were delivered on February 14. The reverse motif, superbly done by Sinnock, is an expression of the prosperity then sweeping the country.

AC-72

1928



Obverse: As preceding; same die.

Reverse: Workmen at screw press mounted on table. To left and right is inscription FIRST COINING PRESS U.S. MINT 1793 while upper legend reads UNITED STATES MINT. In exergue: ANNUAL ASSAY 1928. Treasury Seal above arm of press while monogram AP is at lower right.

Size: 51 mm

Engraver: John R. Sinnock (obverse) and Adam Pietz (reverse)

a) **Bronze**

The coining press shown was used in the early Mint for small coins, such as half dimes and dimes. Fifty bronze medals were ordered on February 3 and delivered on February 10.

AC-73

1929



Obverse: As preceding; same die.

Reverse: Central vignette of front view of first United States Mint. PHILADELPHIA below building; J R SINNOCK to left and ADAM PIETZ to right. Circular legend around vignette reads THE FIRST MINT ERECTED 1792 AND THE FIRST PUBLIC BUILDING AUTHORIZED BY THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES. Legend around whole reads MINT OF THE UNITED STATES ANNUAL ASSAY 1929.

Size: 51 mm

Engraver: John R. Sinnock (obverse); John R. Sinnock and Adam Pietz (reverse)

a) Bronze

The reverse is based on the painting executed in 1914 by Edwin Lamasure. Due to the book by Frank Stewart, there was considerable interest in Mint circles about the early history of the institution.

AC-74

1930



Obverse: Bust to right with legend above PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES. Inscriptions in field read MCMXXIX [1929] to left and HERBERT HOOVER to right. SINNOCK on truncation.

Reverse: Similar to preceding (AC-73) except for date 1930.

Size: 51 mm

Engraver: John R. Sinnock (obverse); John R. Sinnock and Adam Pietz (reverse)

a) Bronze

AC-75

1931



Obverse: As preceding; same die.

Reverse: Front of Philadelphia Mint with legend MINT OF THE UNITED STATES PHILADELPHIA PA. Below building: ANNUAL ASSAY 1931. A. PIETZ at bottom.

Size: 51 mm

Engraver: John R. Sinnock (obverse) and Adam Pietz (reverse)

a) Bronze

AC-76a

1932



Obverse: MOUNT VERNON above view of Washington's home. Cameo portrait of Washington below flanked by date 1732 and 1932. Unsigned.

Reverse: Similar to reverse of 1929 (AC-73) except for date 1932.

Size: 51 mm

Engraver: John R. Sinnock (obverse); John R. Sinnock and Adam Pietz (reverse)

a) Bronze

The obverse design was in commemoration of the bicentennial of the birth of George Washington. Twenty-five bronze medals were ordered on February 8 and delivered nine days later.

AC-76b

1932



Obverse: As preceding (AC-76a) except that it is signed J R SINNOCK at left.

Reverse, Size, and Engraver: As AC-76a.

a) Bronze

Only one medal has been located, in the Smithsonian.

AC-77

1932 (Mule)

Obverse: As preceding (J R SINNOCK at left).

Reverse: As AC-75 (same die).

Size: 51 mm

Engraver: John R. Sinnock (obverse) and Adam Pietz (reverse)

a) Bronze

This mule used, by accident, a 1932 Assay obverse (AC-76b) and the reverse from the 1931 Assay medal. Discovered by John Jay Pittman, for a long time this was the only example known. In 1985 a second specimen (now in the Keusch collection) was found by Carl W.A. Carlson.

AC-78

1933



Obverse: SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY OGDEN L MILLS around bust to left. J.R. SINNOCK below truncation.

Reverse: Similar to reverse of 1931 (AC-75) except for date of 1933.

Size: 51 mm

Engraver: John R. Sinnock (obverse) and Adam Pietz (reverse)

a) **Bronze**

Mills was Treasury Secretary from February 1932 until March 1933. Twenty-five bronze medals were ordered on January 25 and delivered February 7. As with the 1932, this medal is also relatively easily obtained.

AC-79

1934



Obverse: Similar to the reverse first used in 1929 (AC-73) except for date 1934

Reverse: Similar to the reverse first used in 1931 except for lack of date and inscription below building.

Size: 51 mm

Engraver: John R. Sinnock and Adam Pietz (obverse) and Adam Pietz (reverse)

a) **Bronze**



Obverse: Bust to right with legend FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES. Below truncation: J.R. SINNOCK. F. A.D. VIVUM. MCMXXXIV [*J.R. SINNOCK, ENGRAVED FROM LIFE 1934*].

Reverse: Similar to vignette of 1926 (AC-70) but mirror image and slightly different arrangement. MELTING REFINING COINING ASSAYING ENGRAVING around vignette and ANNUAL ASSAY PHILADELPHIA 1935 below. Modern coining press to right. To lower right, initials of Sinnock, JRS.

Size: 51 mm

Engraver: John R. Sinnock

a) Bronze

It is generally believed that Nellie Tayloe Ross, Director of the Mint from 1933 to 1953, posed for the reverse, but this is uncertain due to the close resemblance to the reverse of the 1926 medal. The medal for her directorship uses this reverse without the annual Assay inscription. The 'Ad Vivum' indicates that the President sat for Sinnock in person rather than through the usual medium of photographs.



Obverse: Revised Sinnock bust to right with legend PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES. To left: FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT. Initials J.R.S. and copyright symbol at lower right.

Reverse: GEORGE WASHINGTON PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES 1789 around bust to right. Unsigned.

Size: 76 mm

Engraver: John R. Sinnock (obverse) and Pierre Simon DuVivier (reverse)

a) Bronze

Because the matter had apparently been overlooked, there was a last-minute decision to mule the obverses of two regular presidential medals then being sold by the Mint.

The reverse die (Washington) was first prepared about 1903 by the Mint engraving staff and uses the DuVivier bust from the Washington before Boston medal (MI-1). Medals passed out to commissioners had the inscription ANNUAL ASSAY 1936 incised on the edge.

This is one of the rarest of all modern Assay medals and is the subject of strong competition amongst collectors. A specimen in the Dreyfuss Sale brought \$4400. The year 1936 also marks the beginning of difficulties for collectors in obtaining specimens; those prior to 1936 are much easier to obtain than later dates.



Obverse: Bust to left with legend THOMAS JEFFERSON PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES. Unsigned.

Reverse: Workmen with modern coining press above inscription ANNUAL ASSAY 1937. Partial wreath to right and left. Legend above: U S MINT PHILADELPHIA. At lower edge is found J R SINNOCK.

Size: 58 mm

Engraver: John Reich (obverse) and John R. Sinnock (reverse)

a) Bronze

The obverse die has a reduced bust of Jefferson from the regular presidential medal, which in turn is an adaptation of the die prepared by John Reich in 1801; Sinnock did the lettering. This obverse was probably used as Jefferson was considered the co-founder (with Andrew Jackson) of the modern Democrat party. President Roosevelt was inaugurated for his second term on January 20. The reverse has a modern coining press, not for the first time but the best representation of a press on an Assay medal.



Obverse: Bust to right with BENJAMIN FRANKLIN above. Dates of birth and death, 1706 and 1790, below with crossed branches at lower edge. J.R. SINNOCK 1933 at bottom.

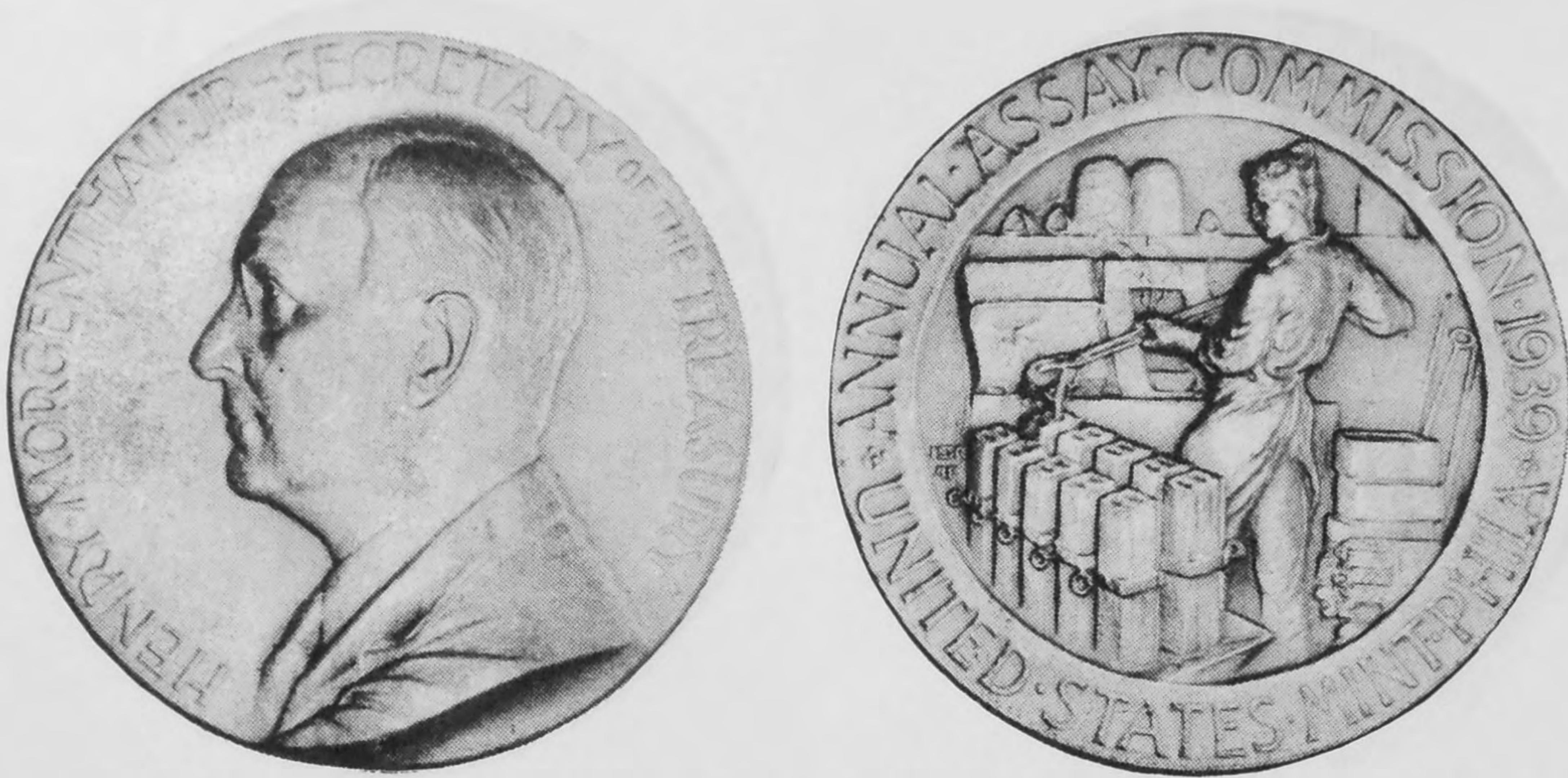
Reverse: Woman in classical dress (Juno Moneta ?) holding scales which symbolize the honesty of the coinage as established by the annual Assay Commission. Mint in background with legend ANNUAL ASSAY COMMISSION above and inscription, in exergue, UNITED STATES MINT PHILADELPHIA. Date 1938 in field. J.R. SINNOCK F. and copyright symbol at lower right, above exergual line.

Size: 56 mm

Engraver: John R. Sinnock

a) Bronze

The decision to use Franklin was probably due to a desire to honor a prominent American and did not rest on any particular date being commemorated. The obverse bust is derived from one originally struck at the Mint on the 200th anniversary of his birth in 1906. Sinnock later used a modification of this bust for the half dollar of 1948. It is the only Assay medal portrait not relating to the presidency, Mint, or Treasury.



Obverse: Bust to left with legend HENRY MORGENTHAU JR SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY. Under truncation: SINNOCK-1938.

Reverse: Workman pouring molten metal, just removed from furnace, into ingot molds. Legend ANNUAL ASSAY COMMISSION 1939 UNITED STATES MINT PHILA. Monograms JRS and AP at left edge of vignette.

Size: 57 mm

Engraver: John R. Sinnock (obverse and reverse) and Adam Pietz (reverse)

a) Bronze

The reverse is one of a series showing Mint techniques; it will be more appreciated in future generations when such work is little known. Ingots are no longer poured and rolled out for coinage as had been the case since the beginning of the Mint. At present either coiled strip - from which planchets are cut out - or actual blanks are purchased from private contractors.

Morgenthau achieved a measure of numismatic notoriety after World War II when it was learned that he had handed over, to the Soviets, glass negatives of the German occupation currency plates; this was done on his own volition and despite strong protests from the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. The action cost taxpayers a large sum of money.

AC-85

1940



Obverse: Similar to obverse of 1936 (AC-81) except for reduction in size.

Reverse: Similar to reverse first used in 1929 (AC-73) except for date of 1940.

Size: 51 mm

Engraver: John R. Sinnock (obverse); John R. Sinnock and Adam Pietz (reverse)

a) Bronze

Records show that twenty-four medals were delivered in late January. They had been ordered on January 26. The reuse of old vignettes probably indicates that the Mint engraving staff was rushed at this period and simply did not have time for new or involved designs.

AC-86

1941



Obverse: Reverse of 1935 medal (AC-80) without inscription in exergue.

Reverse: As reverse of 1939 (AC-84) with date changed to 1941.

Size: 51 mm

Engraver: John R. Sinnock (obverse); John R. Sinnock and Adam Pietz (reverse)

a) Bronze

Nineteen bronze medals were ordered on February 13 and delivered on the 18th. It is probable that the engraving staff made the change of date on a plaster model and then used the reducing machine to create a new die. The same remarks, as made for 1940, hold true for the vignettes used in 1942 as well as 1943 and it was not until late 1944 that the engraving staff felt that there was sufficient time to create something out of the ordinary.



Obverse: Bust of President Franklin D. Roosevelt to right within legend ANNUAL ASSAY COMMISSION 1942. Unsigned.

Reverse: Bust of George Washington to right within legend 150TH ANNIVERSARY UNITED STATES MINT 1792-1942. Unsigned.

Size: 58 mm

Engraver: John R. Sinnock (obverse) and Pierre Simon DuVivier (reverse)

a) Bronze

The obverse is reduction from the regular presidential bust while the reverse is from the Pierre Simon DuVivier bust executed at Paris in the late 1780s for the Washington before Boston medal (MI-1). Eighteen bronze medals were delivered on February 10, having been ordered five days earlier. It is interesting to note that the designer of the medal avoided the pitfall of saying that it was the 150th anniversary of the first meeting of the Assay Commission, which it was not, that date falling in 1947.

AC-88

1943



Obverse: Bust to right with legend **ABRAHAM LINCOLN**.

Reverse: Similar to reverse of 1922 (AC-66) except for change of date to 1943.

Size: 51 mm

Engraver: George Morgan

a) **Bronze**

The obverse is a reduction of the regular presidential medal engraved by Morgan in 1886 while the lettering is new; this obverse (with revised lettering) was reused in 1959. Twenty-four bronze medals were ordered on February 10 and delivered one day later.

AC-89

1944



Obverse: Bust to left with legend **DAVID RITTENHOUSE FIRST DIRECTOR UNITED STATES MINT**. Dates 1792 and 1795 flank bust with scales below. Unsigned.

Reverse: Independence Hall as central vignette and legend **ANNUAL ASSAY COMMISSION UNITED STATES MINT PHILADELPHIA**. Below building **INDEPENDENCE HALL** and date 1944. Initials **JRS** in left field.

Size: 51 mm

Engraver: John R. Sinnock (reverse)

a) **Bronze**

The reverse design is an adaptation of Sinnock's reverse for the sesquicentennial commemorative quarter eagle of 1926. The obverse uses William Barber's bust of Rittenhouse (MT-1), which was executed in the early 1870s. The modifications and lettering to the original Barber design were done by the Mint engraving staff.



Obverse: ANNUAL ASSAY COMMISSION UNITED STATES MINT PHILADELPHIA around head of Liberty. Date 1945 below.

Reverse: Great Seal of the United States.

Size: 76 mm

Engraver: Augustin Dupre

a) Bronze

The obverse was prepared by John R. Sinnock using the head from the famous *Libertas Americana* medal engraved for Benjamin Franklin by Augustin Dupre in Paris shortly after 1783. It symbolized the victory of the colonists over Great Britain in the Revolutionary War. Here it may be taken as an omen of victory in WWII.

The reverse is from the copy die (CM-15) of the Diplomatic Medal prepared by William Barber in 1876. The Diplomatic Medal had originally been engraved by Dupre in Paris by order of Thomas Jefferson and several in gold had actually been presented. Lead proofs had been obtained by Professor Jules Marcon in Paris from the son of Dupre and were loaned to the Mint in 1876 as a guide for the new dies.

AC-91

1946



Obverse: Bust of George Washington to left above dates 1782 and 1799. LAURA GARDIN FRASER SCULPTOR below truncation.

Reverse: Vignette of Mount Vernon (used in 1932, AC-76) with revised inscription below: UNITED STATES ASSAY COMMISSION 1946. 154TH ANNUAL SESSION AT PHILADELPHIA MINT. Unsigned.

Size: 51 mm

Engraver: Laura Gardin Fraser (obverse) and John R. Sinnock (reverse)

a) **Bronze**

The obverse is an adaptation of the medal prepared by Fraser in 1932 for the bicentennial of Washington's birth and struck at the Mint. When this medal was prepared, Mint historians were under the mistaken impression that the first Assay Commission meeting had been held in 1792 whereas in fact the first meeting came in March 1797. There was no meeting in 1817, making the meeting of 1946 the 149th meeting of the Assay Commission.

AC-92

1947



Obverse: As obverse of 1941 (AC-86).

Reverse: 155TH ANNUAL SESSION within wreath. Legend UNITED STATES ASSAY COMMISSION AT PHILADELPHIA MINT 1947. Unsigned.

Size: 51 mm

Engraver: John R. Sinnock (obverse) and Gilroy Roberts (reverse)

a) **Bronze**

This was the 150th annual meeting of the Commission, not the 155th. The reverse artwork, which is imaginative, was engraved by Gilroy Roberts; the original medal design, however, was prepared by John R. Sinnock in the 1920s for Ogden Mills, who was then Under-Secretary of the Treasury.



Obverse: Bust to left with legend above PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES. To right HARRY S. TRUMAN. Below truncation: copyright symbol and SINNOCK. F. AD VIVUM '45.

Reverse: UNITED STATES MINT ANNUAL ASSAY around vignette of Mint. PHILADELPHIA 1792-1948 below building. Treasury Seal near bottom edge. GASPARRO under lower right edge of central vignette.

Size: 56 mm

Engraver: John R. Sinnock (obverse) and Frank Gasparro (reverse)

a) Bronze

The obverse is reduced from the regular 76 mm presidential medal. It is not clear if the 1792 date refers to the first Mint, the presumed date of the first Assay Commission, or both. The Mint building shown here was completed in 1901 and replaced by a newer edifice in 1969.



Obverse: Three women (around table) representing, in classical allegory, the operations of the Assay Commission: weighing, recording, and counting. Legend UNITED STATES MINT with initials GR and date 1949 at lower right.

Reverse: Facade of the Treasury Department in Washington with statue of Alexander Hamilton in front. Legend ANNUAL ASSAY COMMISSION TREASURY DEPARTMENT. Inscription below building reads TREASURY BUILDING WASHINGTON D.C. 1949; Treasury shield at left and United States shield at right. GASPARRO above U.S. shield.

Size: 51 mm

Engraver: Gilroy Roberts (obverse) and Frank Gasparro (reverse)

a) Bronze

This return to the classical design was very successful and shows the great ability of Roberts as an artist. The reverse, by Gasparro, has interest for collectors of Lincoln cents as elements of the design seem to foreshadow the 1959 memorial reverse design. A bronze uniface of the reverse is in the Keusch collection.



Obverse: Legend FIRST MEETING ASSAY COMMISSION 1792 around standing and seated figures labelled JEFFERSON, JAY, and HAMILTON. Implements of Commission on table. GASPARRO at lower right.

Reverse: Independence Hall in Philadelphia with legend and inscription reading ASSAY MEDAL YEAR 1950 and INDEPENDENCE HALL. Liberty Bell below. EVH at lower right.

Size: 51 mm

Engraver: Frank Gasparro (obverse) and Engelhardus von Hebel (reverse)

a) Bronze

There was no meeting in 1792, the obverse scene being in error, but the three men named would have been the correct officials. The design was probably inspired by the fact that 1950 was the 150th anniversary of Washington as the nation's capital and there were extensive public celebrations, including a special commemorative stamp. The Independence Hall reverse ties in with the fictitious meeting being held in Philadelphia.

AC-96

1951



Obverse: Three figures in colonial dress with legend above and below: THE FIRST DIRECTOR [David Rittenhouse] OF THE UNITED STATES MINT VIEWING INITIAL COINAGE. Below: PHILADELPHIA 1792. To lower right the initials EVH.

Reverse: Large eagle before Mint building with legend UNITED STATES MINT ASSAY COMMISSION 1951. GASPARRO at lower right.

Size: 51 mm

Engraver: Engelhardus von Hebel (obverse) and Frank Gasparro (reverse)

a) Bronze

One of the other figures presumably stands for Henry Voight, the first chief coiner. The other figure may be meant for Robert Scot (Engraver) or Tristam Dalton (Treasurer). The reverse eagle bears a striking resemblance to the pair of eagles at the entrance of the present United States Mint at Philadelphia. The obverse scene is loosely based on the John Ward Dunsmore painting commissioned by Frank Stewart about 1914.

AC-100

1956

Size: 51 mm

Engraver: Gilroy Roberts

a) Bronze

AC-97

1952



Obverse: Triad of classical figures; two women and a man. Legend ANNUAL ASSAY UNITED STATES MINT with dates 1792 and 1952 in the field. The central figure holds a cornucopia in her hands. GR and 1952 at lower right.

Reverse: Facade of first Mint as it appeared in 1792 with inscription YE OLDE MINT. Treasury seal below. FG at lower right.

Size: 51 mm

Engraver: Gilroy Roberts (obverse) and Frank Gasparro (reverse)

a) Bronze

The first Assay Commission meeting was held in 1797, not 1792. The reverse is adapted from the Edwin Lamasure painting of 1914, which had been commissioned by Frank Stewart. The reverse vignette was reused on the last Assay Commission medal in 1977.

AC-98

1953



Obverse: Facing head and shoulders of Mercury with legend UNITED STATES MINT. To right the inscription MERCURIUS MONETAE CUSTOS [MERCURY, THE PROTECTOR OF THE MONEY]. GR in field to left.

Reverse: Central figure of a woman with cornucopia of money surrounded by inscription ANNUAL ASSAY 1953 and four figures representing (from upper left, clockwise): mining, refining, smelting, and coining of the precious metals. Small scales below with initials GR. Crossed pick and shovel above.

Size: 51 mm

Engraver: Gilroy Roberts

a) Bronze

[1954]

There was no special Assay Commission medal for 1954. The commissioners, acting on a suggestion by E. Ward Russell, chose the regular Lincoln presidential medal (by George Morgan, PR-12); their names were engraved on the edge. Many collectors do not therefore consider this a regular Assay medal. This medal is still for sale by the Mint.

AC-99

1955



Obverse: Legend DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER around bust to left. On truncation G ROBERTS 1954.

Reverse: Similar to AC-72 of 1928 except for new date of 1955.

Size: 51 mm

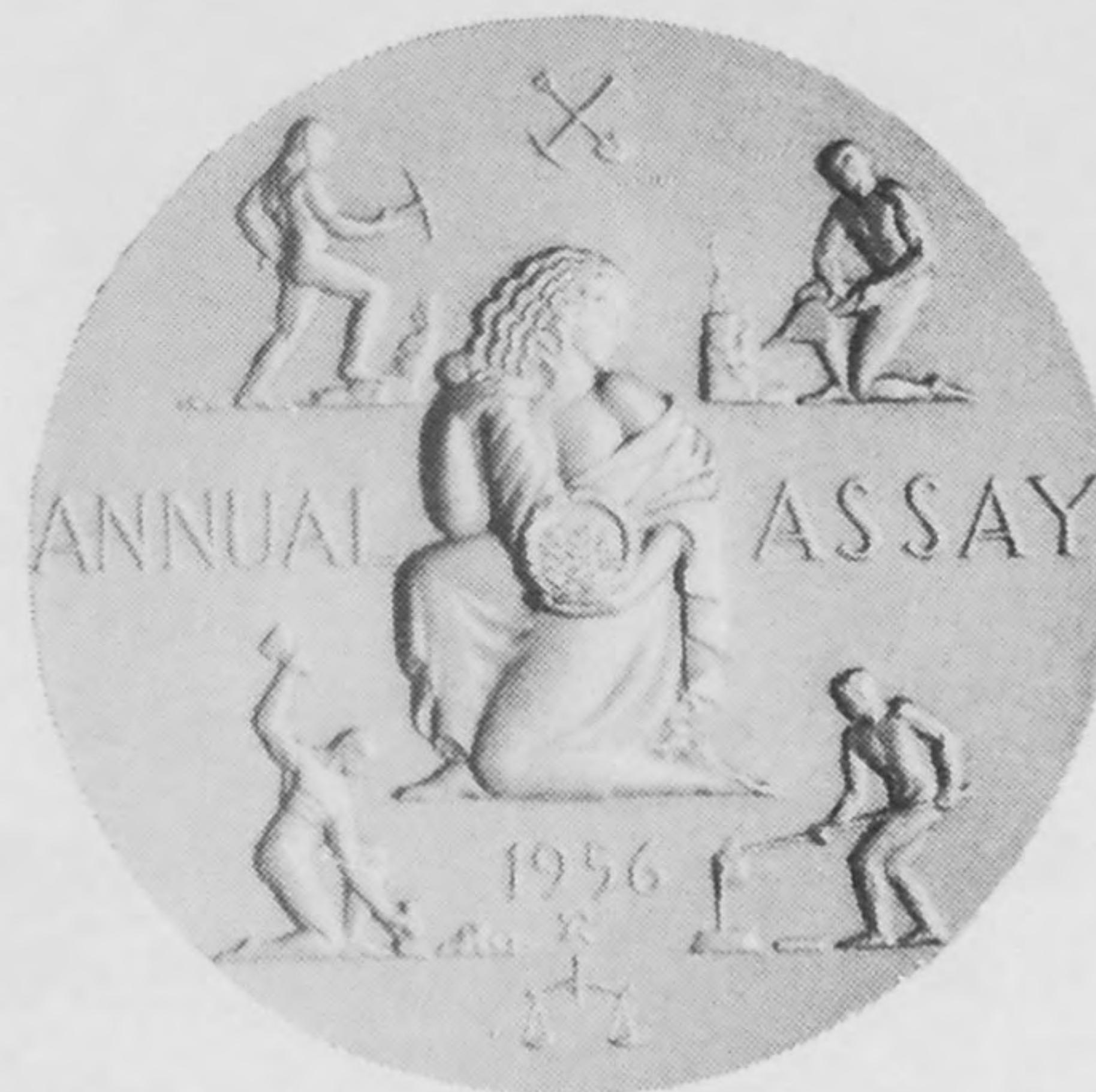
Engraver: Gilroy Roberts (obverse) and Adam Pietz (reverse)

a) Bronze

The obverse bust is reduced from the regular presidential series medal.

AC-100

1956



Obverse: As preceding; same die.

Reverse: As reverse of 1953 (AC-97) except for date 1956.

Size: 51 mm

Engraver: Gilroy Roberts

a) Bronze



Obverse: Facing bust with legend ALEXANDER HAMILTON and dates of birth and death, 1757 and 1804.

Reverse: Treasury Seal with legend THE SAVRI AMERICAEE SEPTENTRIONALIS SIGILLVM [SEAL OF THE TREASURY OF NORTH AMERICA]. The whole surrounded by the legend UNITED STATES MINT ANNUAL ASSAY 1792 1957.

Size: 76 mm

Engraver: George Morgan (obv) and Frank Gasparro (rev)

a) Bronze

The obverse is from the die of the regular Hamilton medal which may still be purchased from the Mint.

AC-102

1958



Obverse: As obverse of 1956 (AC-100), same die.

Reverse: Statue of Freedom (from figure atop the U.S. Capitol Building in Washington) above American shield and under legend ATOMS FOR PEACE. To left of statue is an atomic symbol. Clockwise, from upper left, are figures representing Plenty, Industry, Commerce, and Chemistry. Inscription below UNITED STATES MINT ANNUAL ASSAY 1958. At lower right E. VON HEBEL.

Size: 51 mm

Engraver: Gilroy Roberts (obverse) and Engelhardus von Hebel (reverse)

a) Bronze

The reverse is an adaptation of the regular Eisenhower presidential medal, second term. The Atoms for Peace program was a major plank of this administration and the smaller figures represent applications of atomic energy.

AC-103

1959



Obverse: Bust to right with legend ABRAHAM LINCOLN. Similar to 1943 except for revised lettering.

Reverse: Cartouche with dates 1792 - 1959 above inscription UNITED STATES MINT ANNUAL ASSAY. Small eagle over American shield in wreath to lower right; laurel and palm branches to left. E PLURIBUS UNUM [ONE OUT OF MANY] on lower scroll.

Size: 62 mm

Engraver: George Morgan

a) Bronze

The obverse die is from the Lincoln centennial medal of 1909 by George Morgan. The reverse is an adaptation of the same 1909 medal with the wording changed.

AC-104

1960



Obverse: Similar to AC-102 (1958) except for size.

Reverse: Similar to AC-102 (1958) except for date 1960 and size.

Size: 33 mm

Engraver: Gilroy Roberts (obverse) and Engelhardus von Hebel (reverse)

a) Silver

Q. David Bowers notes (Dreyfuss sale #5091, April 1986) that the finish is matte with Florentine-style toning. Thirty were ordered on February 8 and delivered shortly thereafter. Oddly enough, the fineness was specified at .900 instead of the usual fine silver employed in the nineteenth century. This was the only striking of silver Assay medals found in the Mint record books for 1925 through 1962.

AC-105

1961



Obverse: As obverse of 1937 (AC-82).

Reverse: As reverse of 1939 (AC-84) except for date 1961.

Size: 57 mm

Engraver: John Reich (obverse); John R. Sinnock and Adam Pietz (reverse)

a) **Bronze**

There being no time to prepare a bust of President Kennedy, Jefferson - as founder of the Democrat party - was used instead.

AC-106

1962



Obverse: Bust to left with legend JOHN F. KENNEDY. GILROY ROBERTS 1961 on truncation.

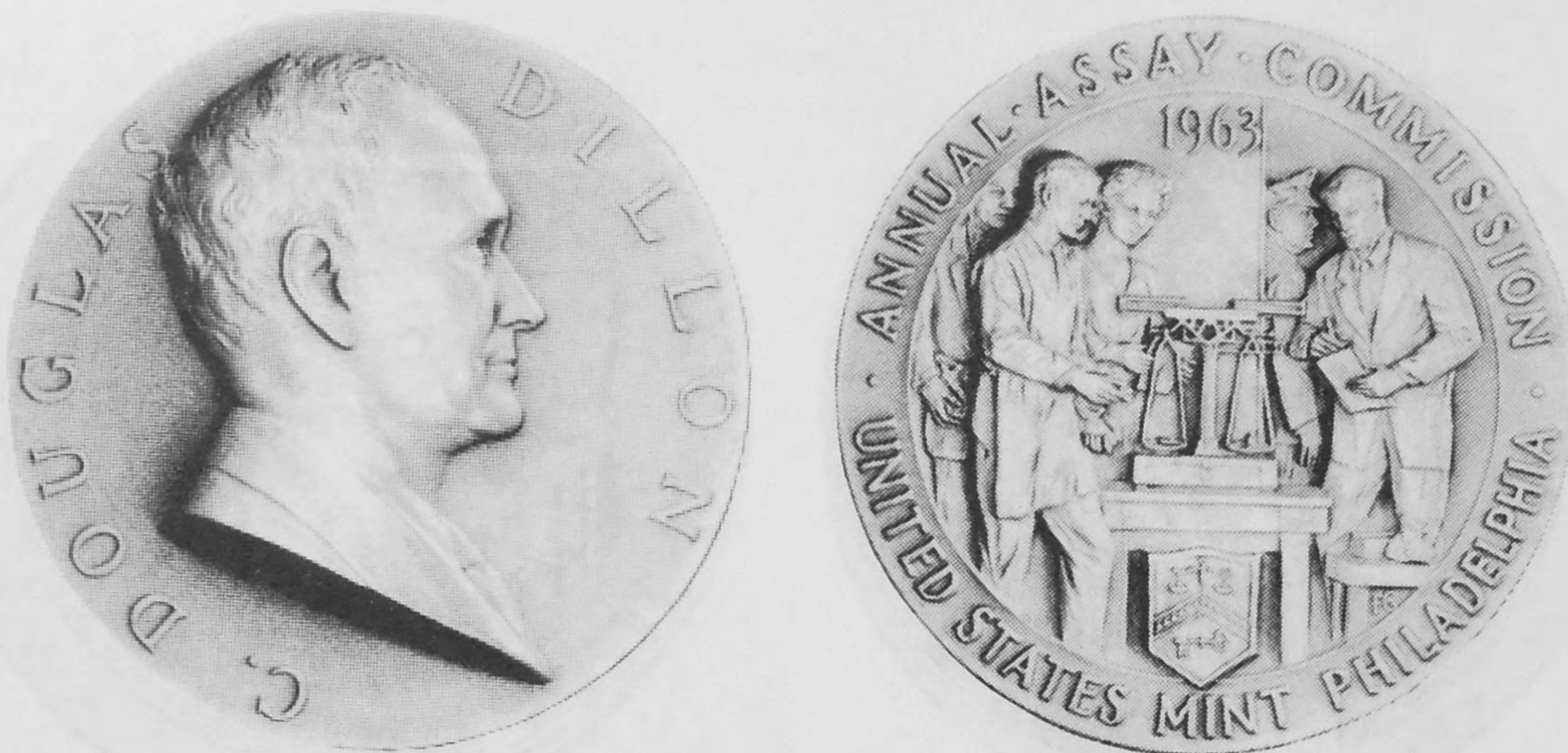
Reverse: As preceding year except for date 1962.

Size: 57 mm

Engraver: Gilroy Roberts (obverse); John R. Sinnock and Adam Pietz (reverse)

a) **Bronze**

The obverse bust and lettering are reduced from the regular presidential medal.



Obverse: Bust to right with legend C. DOUGLAS DILLON. On truncation: GILROY ROBERTS 1961.

Reverse: Four Assay Commissioners weighing and counting coins; guard in background. 1963 in field. Legend ANNUAL ASSAY COMMISSION UNITED STATES MINT PHILADELPHIA. Treasury Seal below and initials FG at lower right.

Size: 57 mm

Engraver: Gilroy Roberts (obverse) and Frank Gasparro (reverse)

a) Silver

This is the last and largest Assay Commission medal to be struck in silver. The obverse bust and lettering are a reduction from the regular medal for Treasury Secretary Dillon. The reverse vignette is of particular significance as it shows the only contemporary medallic view of commissioners at work.



AC-108

1964



Obverse: Legend LYNDON B. JOHNSON around bust to left. GILROY ROBERTS 1963 on truncation.

Reverse: Hand holding Kennedy half dollar in front of various instruments used by Assay Commissioners, including scales and weights. Legend UNITED STATES MINT AT PHILADELPHIA ANNUAL ASSAY COMMISSION 1964. Initials ERG at right center.

Size: 57 mm

Engraver: Gilroy Roberts (obverse) and Edward R. Grove (reverse)

a) Bronze

The obverse bust and lettering are a reduction from the first presidential medal for Johnson.

AC-109

1965



Obverse: Facing bust beneath legend LYNDON B. JOHNSON. On truncation: F GASPARRO.

Reverse: Martha Washington inspecting the first coinage (of half dismes) in 1792 with legend ANNUAL ASSAY PHILADELPHIA 1792-1965. Signed on right edge: F GASPARRO.

Size: 57 mm

Engraver: Frank Gasparro

a) Bronze

The reverse scene is adapted from the 1914 painting by John Ward Dunsmore; this was done at Frank Stewart's direction. The reverse has a special numismatic allusion in that the portrait on the 1792 half disme has traditionally been thought to be of Martha Washington. The obverse is a reduction from the regular presidential medal, second term. The first Assay Commission meeting was held in 1797, not 1792.

AC-110

1966



Obverse: HENRY H. FOWLER above facing portrait. F. GASPARRO on right shoulder truncation.

Reverse: Modernistic balance scale with inscription ASSAY COMMISSION 1966. P FOWLER below.

Size: 57 mm

Engraver: Frank Gasparro (obverse) and Phillip Fowler (reverse)

a) Bronze

The obverse bust and lettering is reduced from the regular Treasury medal - still sold by the Mint - for Henry Fowler. The design is unique because it does not mention the Mint, Philadelphia, or the United States.

AC-111

1967



Obverse: Facing bust with EVA ADAMS above. Nevada mining scenes in background. Seal of Treasury to right and F GASPARRO at lower right.

Reverse: View of new Philadelphia Mint with legend FOURTH UNITED STATES MINT ASSAY COMMISSION 1792 1967 PHILADELPHIA PENNA. At lower edge: M G IACOCCA.

Size: 57 mm

Engraver: Frank Gasparro (obverse) and Michael G. Iacocca (reverse)

a) Bronze

The obverse is reduced from the regular Director of the Mint medal still sold by the Mint. The reverse view of the Mint is from the architect's drawings as the building was then under construction.



Obverse: Facing bust with legend SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY. Inscription at sides 1801 1814 ALBERT GALLATIN. At lower edge: F GASPARRO.

Reverse: Weight labelled POUND TROY 1824 BATE LONDON in three lines. Smaller weights marked GRAIN, GRAM and OUNCE. Legend ANNUAL ASSAY COMMISSION 1968. At lower right: E STEEVER.

Size: 57 mm

Engraver: Frank Gasparro (obverse) and Edgar Z. Steever (reverse)

a) Bronze

The troy pound weight was imported from London in 1824 and long served as the official standard weight of the United States government. An exact copy was kept at the Philadelphia Mint as the standard weight for our coinage. An incuse crown on the standard represents the Royal Mint in London.



Obverse: Bust to right with legend PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES above and inscription to left reading RICHARD MILHOUS NIXON. On the truncation is found F GASPARRO.

Reverse: View of new Philadelphia (from a slightly different perspective than on the 1967 medal) with exergual inscription UNITED STATES MINT PHILADELPHIA ASSAY COMMISSION 1969. Name of artist, FOWLER, at lower edge.

Size: 57 mm

Engraver: Frank Gasparro (obverse) and Phillip Fowler (reverse)

a) Bronz

The obverse is a reduction of the regular presidential medal for Nixon, still on sale by the Mint. Gasparro had finished this work in January 1969, just before Nixon's first inaugural on January 20. Except for 1977, this issue is the most common of the late medals.

AC-114

1970



Obverse: DAVID M. KENNEDY above facing portrait. F GASPARRO on right truncation.

Reverse: Similar to 1957 (AC-101) except for 1970 date.

Size: 57 mm

Engraver: Frank Gasparro

a) Bronze

The obverse is a reduction from the regular series of Treasury Secretary medals.

AC-115

1971



Obverse: Facing bust surrounded by legend MARY BROOKS DIRECTOR OF THE MINT. On right truncation: F GASPARRO.

Reverse: Similar to 1965 (AC-109) except for 1971 date.

Size: 57 mm

Engraver: Frank Gasparro

a) Bronze

The obverse die is a reduction of the regular Director of the Mint medal still sold by the Mint. (Special thanks are due this Mint Director for the help given R.W. Julian when working on the TAMS medal catalogue covering the Mint medals of 1792-1892.)

AC-116

1972



Obverse: JOHN B. CONNALLY above facing portrait with F GASPARRO on right truncation.

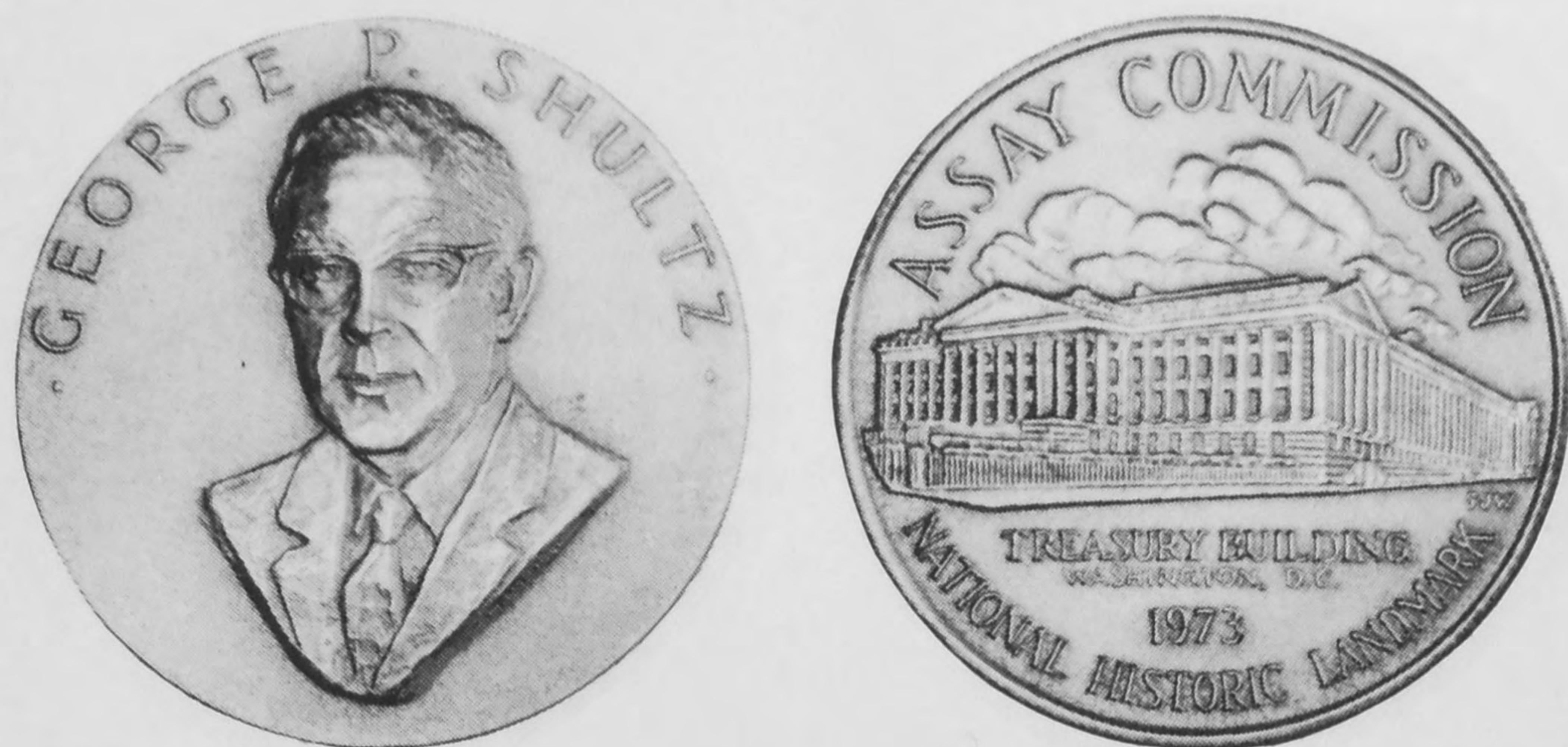
Reverse: View of Treasury Building in Washington surrounded by legend UNITED STATES ASSAY COMMISSION and interior inscription TREASURY DEPARTMENT 1972. Initials SJW at lower right.

Size: 57 mm

Engraver: Frank Gasparro (obverse) and Sherl J. Winter (reverse)

a) Bronze

The obverse is reduced from the regular Treasury Secretary series for Connally, which is still for sale by the Mint. Connally is perhaps best known for having sat beside President Kennedy in the open convertible on the trip to Dallas, November 22, 1963.



Obverse: Facing bust with legend GEORGE P. SHULTZ above. F GASPARRO on right truncation.

Reverse: Vignette similar to preceding except for different arrangement of lettering and clouds added above building. Legend reads ASSAY COMMISSION while inscription in exergue is TREASURY BUILDING WASHINGTON, D.C. 1973 NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK. Initials SJW at right.

Size: 57 mm

Engraver: Frank Gasparro (obverse) and Sherl J. Winter (reverse)

a) Bronze

The obverse is a reduction from the Shultz medal as Treasury Secretary and is still for sale to the public. Shultz later became Secretary of State under President Reagan in the mid- 1980s.



Obverse: Bust to right with legend GEORGIO WASHINGTON SVPREMO DVCI EXERCITVVM ADSERTORI LIBERTATIS COMITIA AMERICANA [*THE AMERICAN CONGRESS TO GEORGE WASHINGTON SUPREME COMMANDER OF THE ARMY, THE CHAMPION OF FREEDOM*]. DUVIVIER PARIS F [ENGRAVED BY DUVIVIER, PARIS] to left and ASSAY COMMISSION 1974 to right.

Reverse: Great Seal of the United States (with FG by eagle's tail) above globe and beneath word PEACE. Inscription below reads WE STAND ON THE THRESHOLD OF A NEW ERA OF PEACE IN THE WORLD...RICHARD M. NIXON. Border of 50 stars.

Size: 57 mm

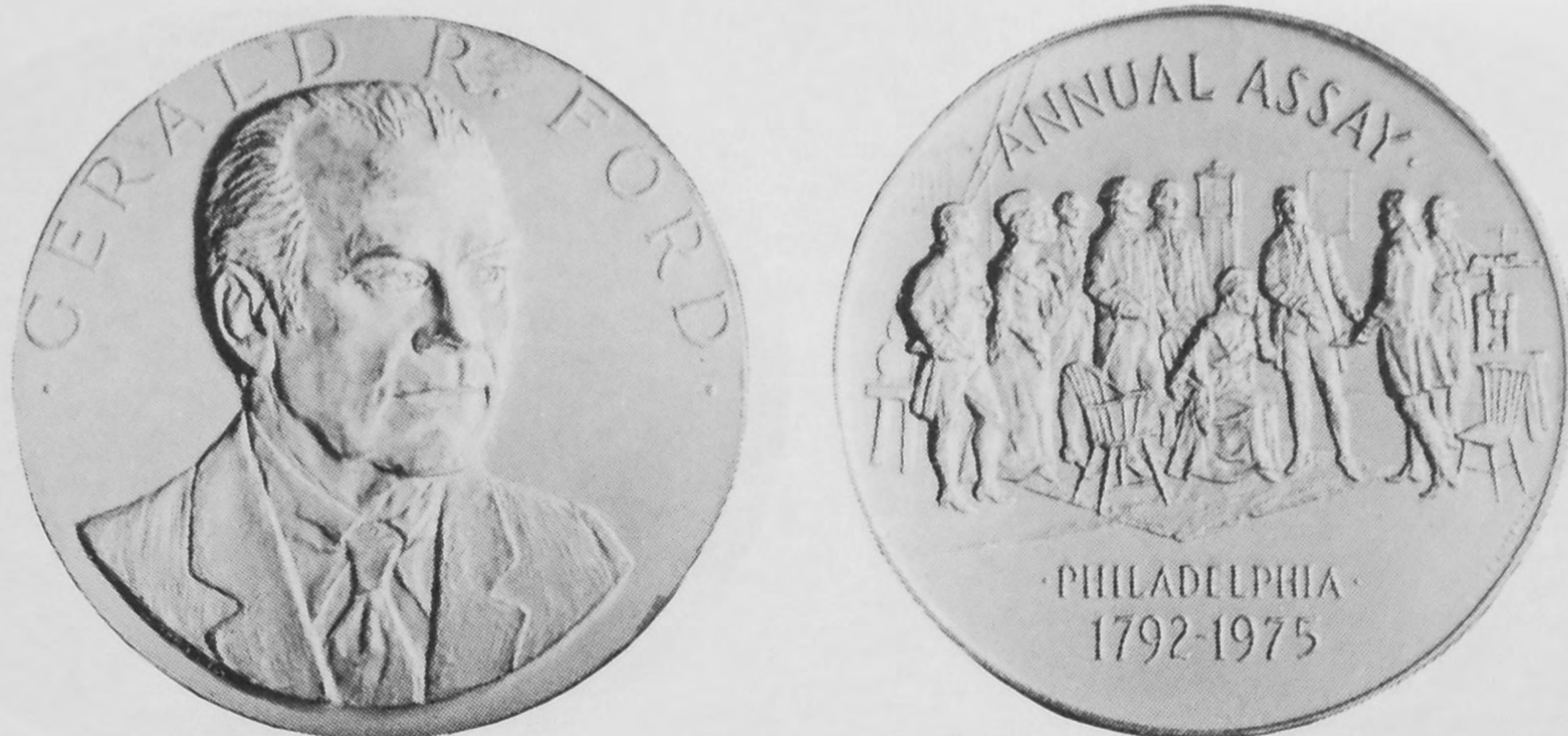
Engraver: Pierre Simon DuVivier (obverse) and Frank Gasparro (reverse)

a) Pewter

The obverse is adapted from MT-1, the medal awarded by Congress to George Washington for capturing Boston from the British in 1776. The reverse design is one of the best in the late series.

AC-119

1975



Obverse: GERALD R. FORD above facing portrait. F GASPARRO on left truncation.

Reverse: Similar to 1971 medal (AC-115) except for 1975 date.

Size: 57 mm

Engraver: Frank Gasparro

a) Bronze

The obverse is reduced from the regular presidential series medal for Ford, still for sale by the Mint. Medals of this date are somewhat thicker than others of the period.



Obverse: Facing portrait of William Simon under legend ANNUAL ASSAY COMMISSION and flanked by inscriptions WILLIAM E. SIMON SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY and MARY BROOKS DIRECTOR OF THE MINT. On truncation to right: F GASPARRO.

Reverse: Legend INDEPENDENCE BICENTENNIAL 1776- 1976 and WASHINGTON CROSSING THE DELAWARE around a scene from the famous painting by Emmanuel Leutze. Initials FG at right.

Size: 76 mm x 60 mm (oval)

Engraver: Frank Gasparro

a) Pewter

The last public Assay Commission was held in 1976. Simon was a prominent official both in the Nixon and Ford administrations and is best known for his distinguished public services as Treasury Secretary and Energy Czar.



Obverse: Portrait to right with legend ANNUAL ASSAY COMMISSION above. Flanking inscriptions 1977 and MARTHA WASHINGTON. On the truncation E GROVE and P FOWLER.

Reverse: View of first Mint similar to that on the 1952 Assay medal (AC-97) with FIRST UNITED STATES MINT 1792 above and PHILADELPHIA below. MP (Matthew Peloso) at lower left and F GASPARRO at lower right.

Size: 76 mm x 60 mm (oval)

Engraver: Phillip Fowler and Edward Grove (obverse); Frank Gasparro (reverse)

a) Pewter

This medal was sold to the public for a short time when President Carter abolished the public part of the annual Assay Commission in early 1977. (It is rumored that the President gave the originals to his political friends.) Public sales were in the standard Mint medal box while the originals were in a plush case. The obverse portrait is from the pattern half dollar struck in the early 1960s to test metallic replacements for silver.

MEMORIES OF THE 1974 UNITED STATES ASSAY COMMISSION

by Philip F. Keller

I have been asked why I wanted to be a member of the United States Assay Commission. There was no payment involved, very few knew of it, so why was it important?

My hobby is collecting coins and medals and the Assay Commission was an integral part of the coinage process. From the earliest days of the Republic the Commission had annually tested the quality of our coins. To be a part of this process was to be a part of history itself.

With the encouragement of two close friends, John Jay Pittman and Pierre Palmentier, both former Assay Commissioners, I began my quest. The involved process of getting an appointment began with sending for an application form. Next, at the suggestion of another friend, Congressman Jim Broyhill of North Carolina, I obtained political endorsements from the local party chairman up through my Ohio congressman.

The Commission met annually on the second Wednesday of February and I started to collect the necessary endorsements in July 1973. The paperwork was completed in October and then the waiting commenced. Hundreds had applied - would I be one of the lucky few?

With no word of any kind by late January, I thought my efforts had failed. However, on February 8 I received good news from the office of the mint director: I had been appointed by President Nixon as a member of the 1974 Assay Commission, due to meet in five days. They apologized for the short notice, asking if I could still attend. I said that "nothing could stop me." It was a dream come true.

The meeting began promptly at 9 A.M. on February 13 in the Philadelphia Mint Assay room. Mint Director Mary Brooks welcomed the Commissioners and introduced everyone present. Then, on behalf of the President, she presented the signed commissions to each member. Judge Joseph S. Lord III administered the formal oath of office to each appointee.

Barbara Hyde, who was chosen as chairman, selected individuals to serve on the counting, weighing, and assaying committees. I served on the first named and enjoyed the experience very much.

Our committee carefully examined each package of dimes, quarters, and half dollars from the different mints

and we spent the morning verifying the numbers of coins reserved. Each of us realized that we were an integral part of the oldest continuing Federal commission, performing a service that dated back to the presidency of George Washington. The sense of history was particularly true for the counting committee, as silver had been eliminated from the coinage at the end of 1970.

We were later given a tour of the Mint, into areas where the average citizen does not go, but the most interesting part to me was talking to the other members and learning what motivated them to seek the appointment. I found that their reasons were the same as mine.

The same evening we attended a formal banquet. The highlight was the presentation, by Mary Brooks, of the special pewter medal to each member of the 1974 Assay Commission. The honor of the occasion, the excitement of the whole event, meeting outstanding collectors sharing the same interests, made for an experience I shall never forget.

During the course of the evening, I had the pleasure of meeting Chief Engraver Frank Gasparro and his assistant, Phillip Fowler. The chief engraver told me of his discovering a hitherto unknown wash drawing by Thomas Sully of the Seated Liberty. It had been used by Christian Gobrecht for his famous design and was now hanging on his office wall.

On returning to our motel, I said to my wife Gwen that I would really have liked to see the drawing, and wondered if it would be possible. She felt it was important enough that we take the time, the next day, to go back to the Mint and ask for Mr. Gasparro.

Upon arriving at the Mint I was informed by the receptionist that the chief engraver did not see anyone except by appointment. I explained that I was a member of the Assay Commission and asked to have his office called to inquire if he might see me. Attitudes changed immediately and the call was made; in less than three minutes we were on our way upstairs. I now have a picture of that drawing, flanked by Mr. Gasparro and myself, hanging in my den. It is a constant reminder of one of the most exciting times of my life.

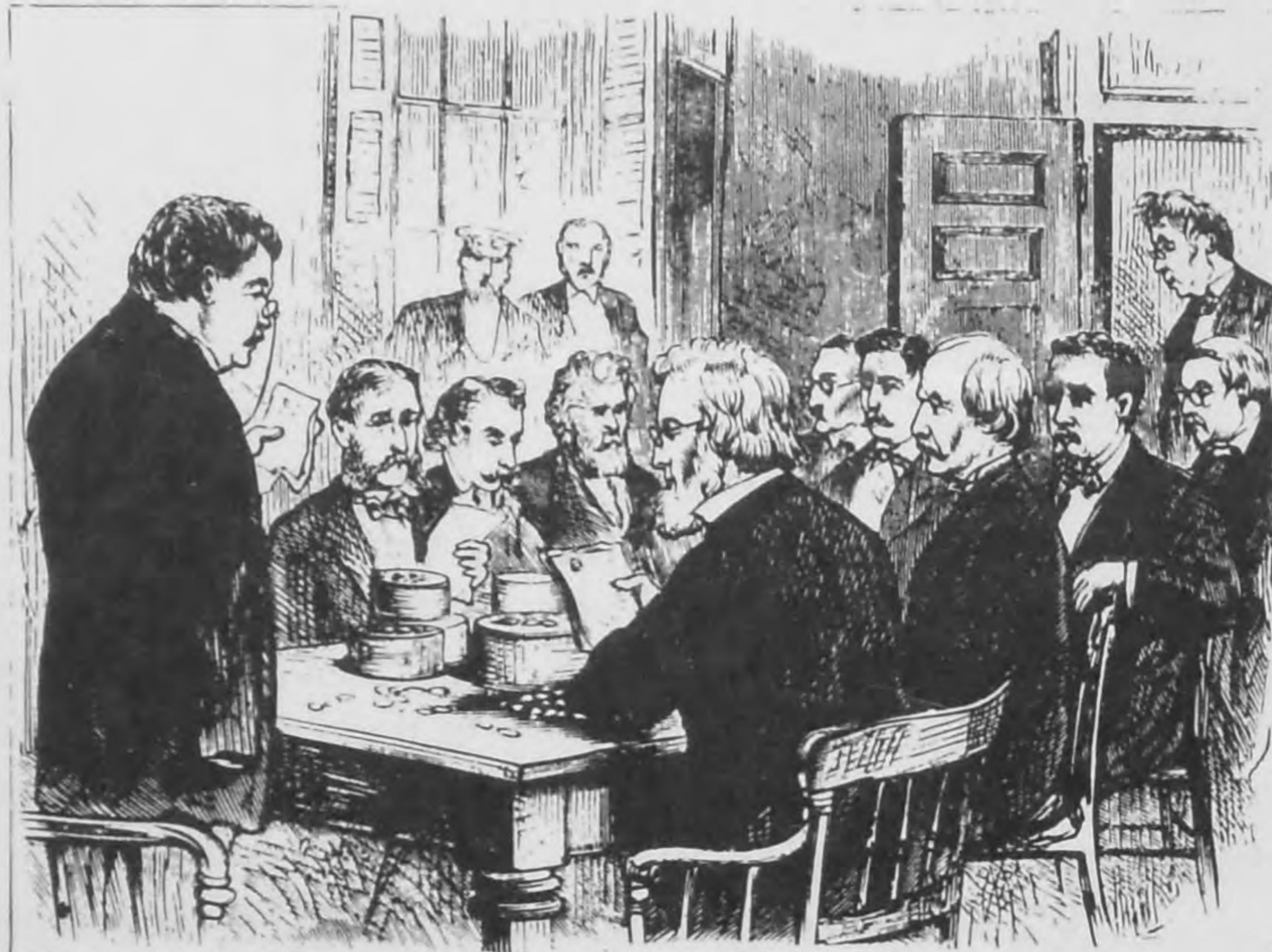


FIG. 1—COUNTING THE SAMPLES OF COIN.

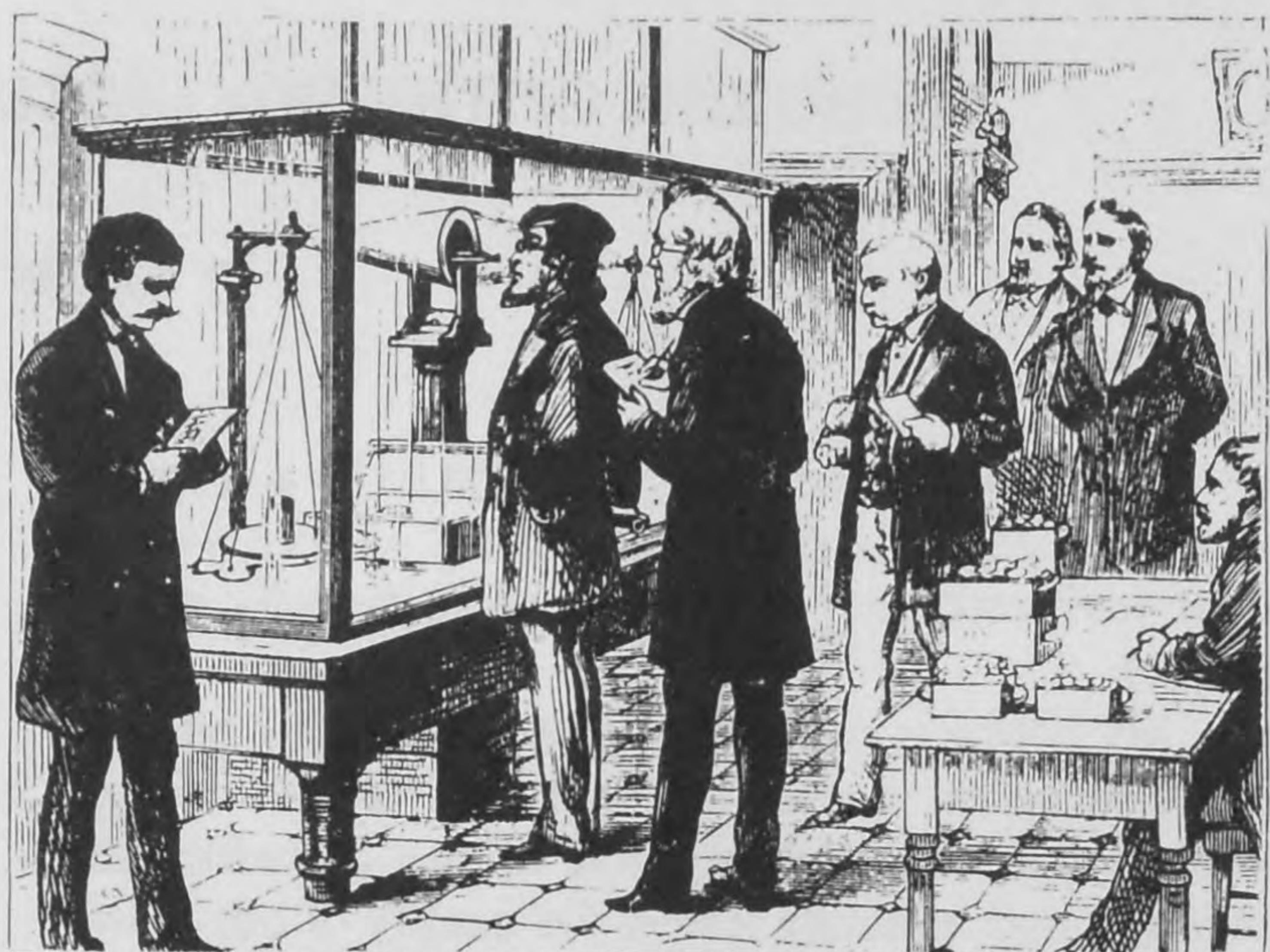


FIG. 2—WEIGHING THE SAMPLES OF COIN.

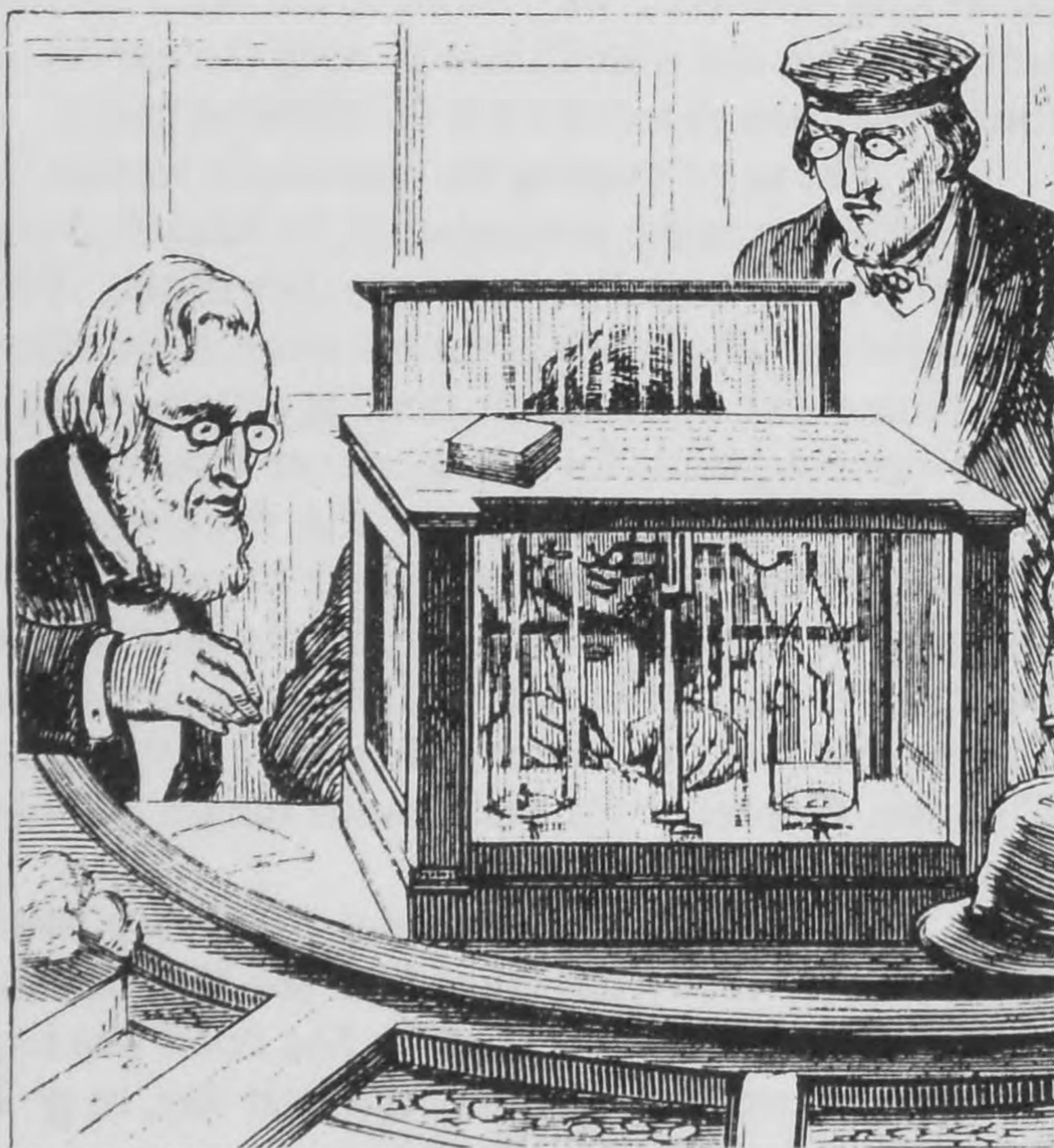


FIG. 3—WEIGHING THE SINGLE PIECES.

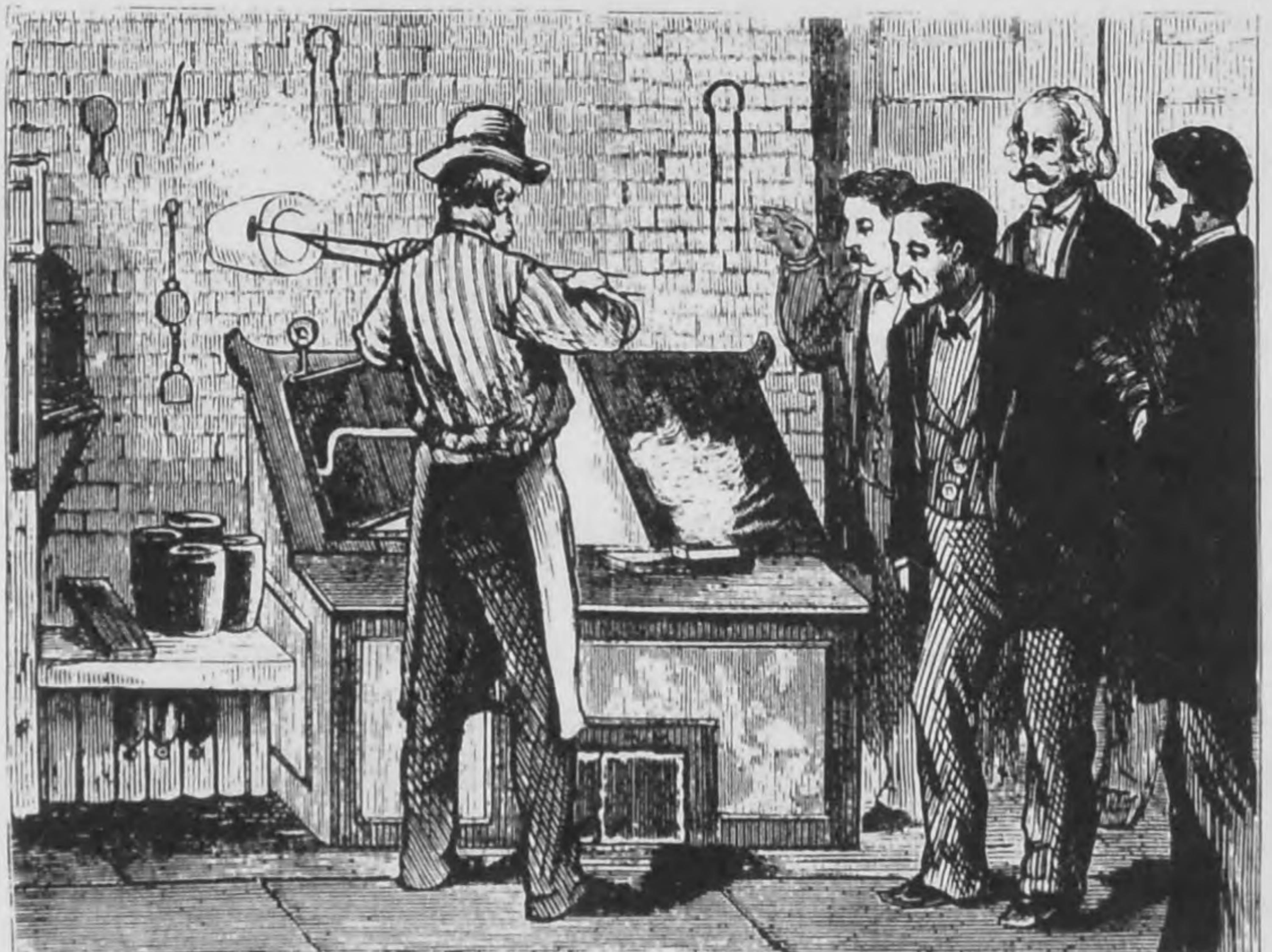


FIG. 4—SHOWING THAT THE BLACK-LEAD CRUCIBLE IS CLEAR.



FIG. 5—WEIGHING THE CLIPPINGS PREVIOUS TO CUPELLING.



FIG. 6—ROLLING OUT THE SAMPLES.

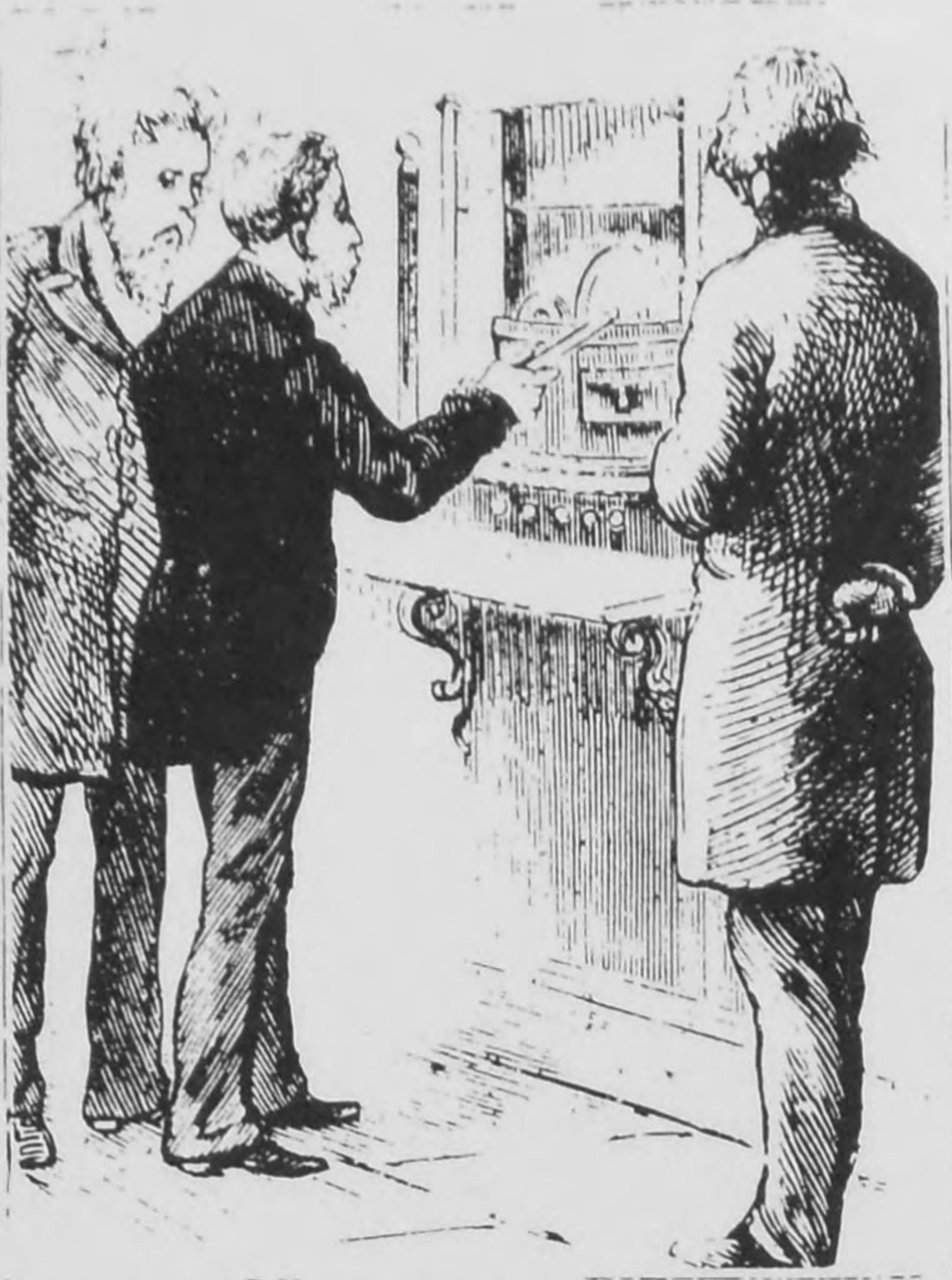


FIG. 7—CUPELLING THE GOLD TO SEPARATE IT FROM ITS ALLOY, ALL EXCEPT THE SILVER.



FIG. 8—DISSOLVING THE SILVER BY NITRIC ACID, AND THE ALLOY OF THE GOLD BY NITRIC ACID BATH.

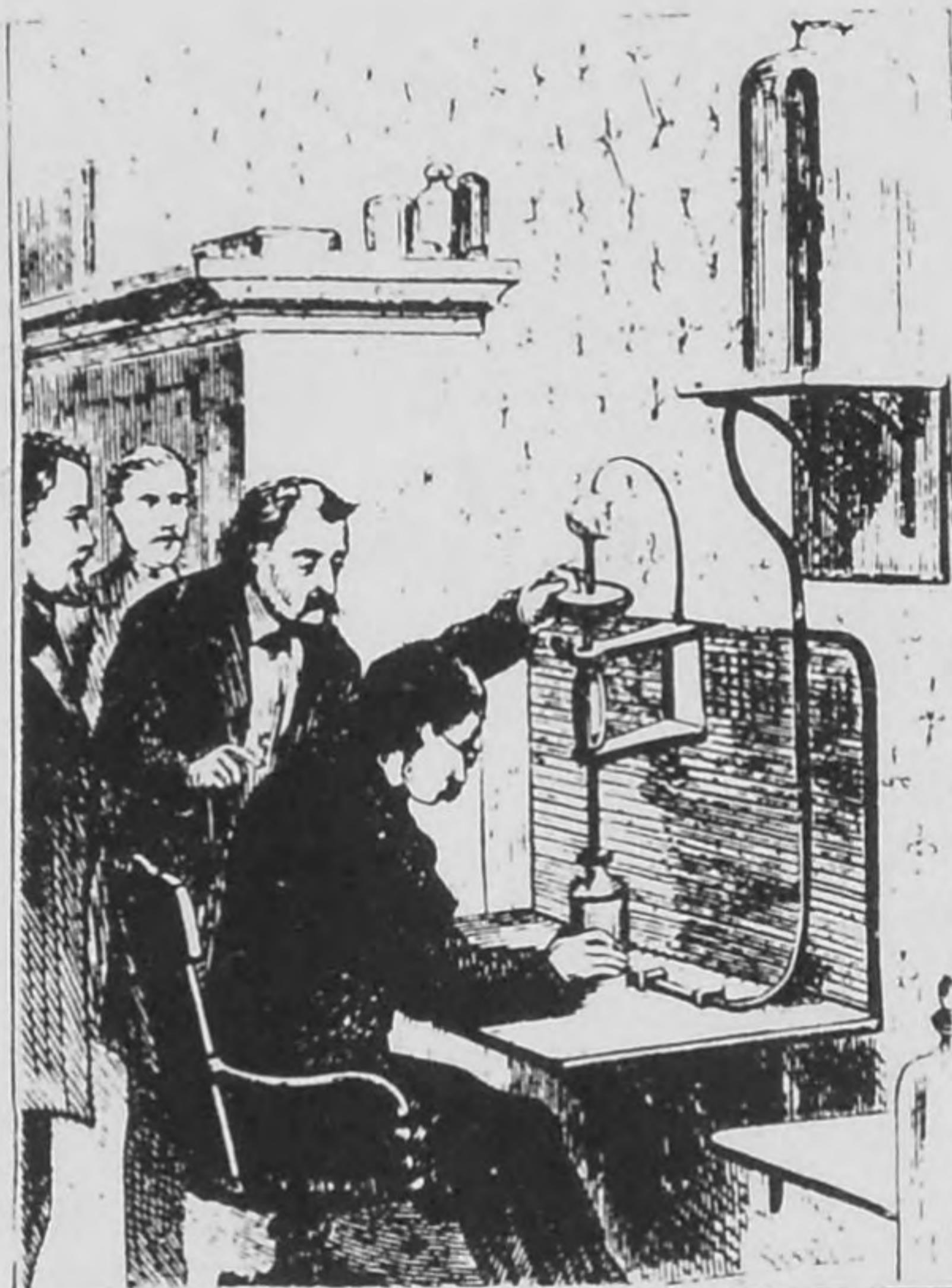


FIG. 9—PUTTING THE SALT WATER INTO THE SOLUTION OF THE COIN IN BOTTLES.

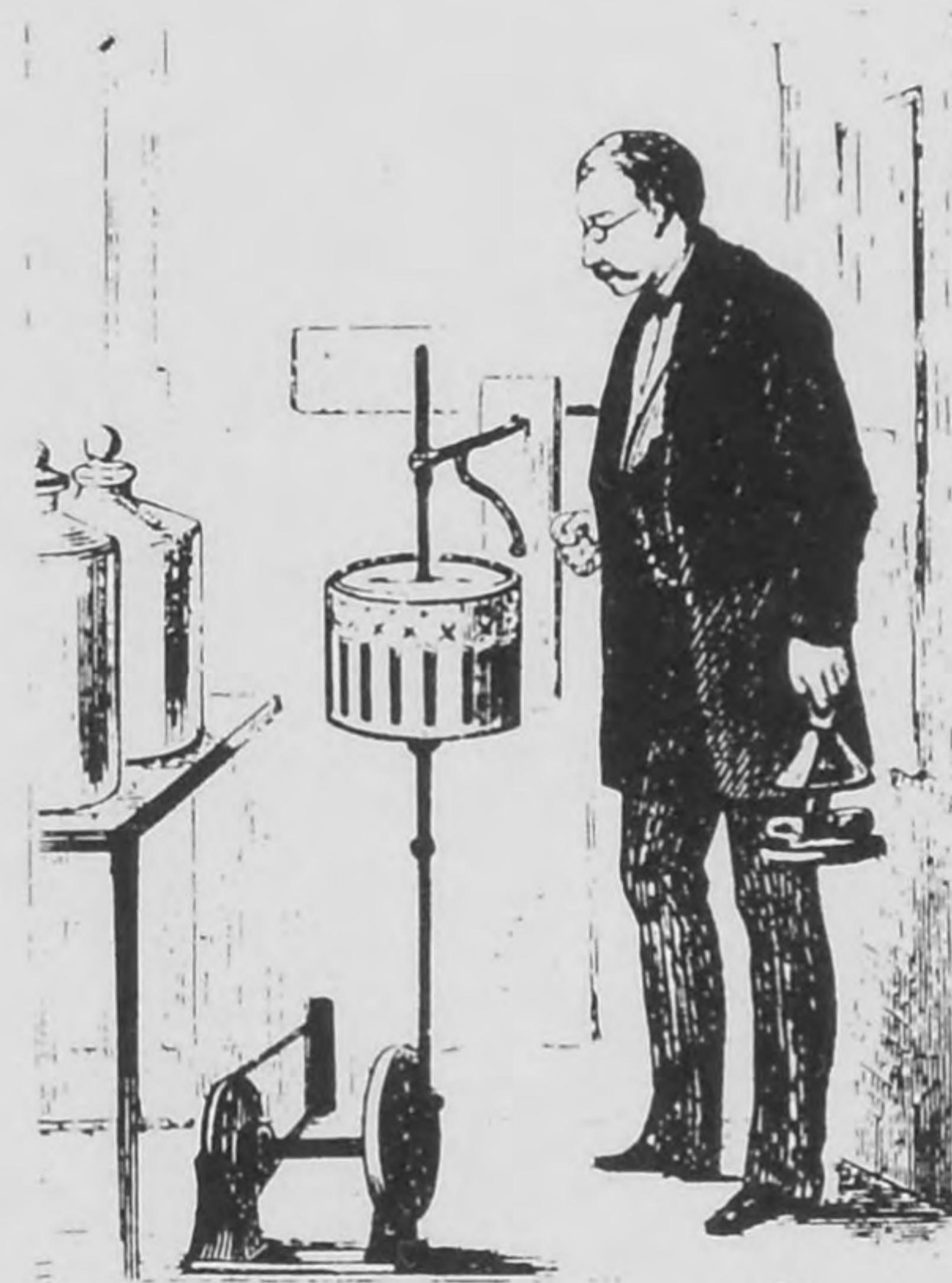


FIG. 10—MECHANICAL AGITATOR USED TO MAKE THE CHLORIDE OF SILVER SUBSIDE.

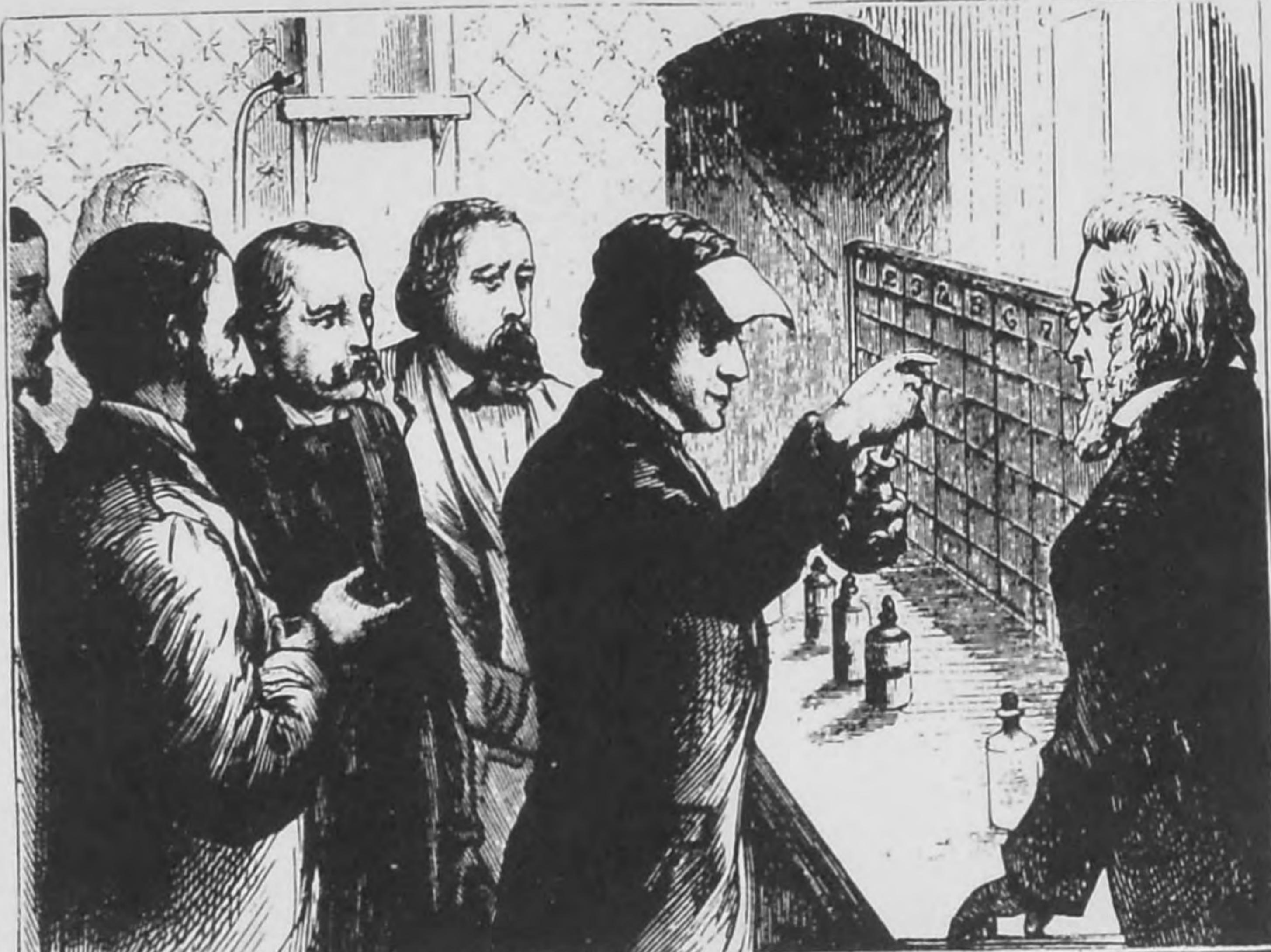


FIG. 11—THE LAST OPERATION, TO EXHIBIT THE PROPORTION OF PURE SILVER.

The United States Assay Commission of 1876 from Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, March 4, 1876.

The following pages were extracted from an original of *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, issue of March 4, 1876. The article is on page 167 and the illustrations are on page 169. Engraved images and text were added by the present editor so readers would have higher quality illustrations and the original text to which they refer.

Roger W. Burdette

April 29, 2025

TRIAL OF THE PYX;

OR, THE ANNUAL TEST OF GOLD AND SILVER COIN AT THE UNITED STATES MINT.¹

In order to secure a due conformity in the gold and silver coins of the United States to their respective standards of fineness and weight, it is provided by law that the Judge of the District Court for the Eastern Division of Pennsylvania, the Comptroller of the Currency, the Chief Assayer of the Assay Office at New York, and such other persons as the President shall from time to time designate, shall meet as Assay Commissioners at the Mint in Philadelphia, to examine and test the coins received by the several mints for this purpose, on the second Wednesday in February, annually. The test of the coins is technically called "The Trial of the Pyx," and has just been made in Philadelphia.

The following gentlemen were designated by the President as commissioners: Robert E. Rogers, Professor of Chemistry, University of Pennsylvania; F. A. P. Barnard, President of Columbia College, New York; William H. Chandler, Professor of Chemistry, Lehigh University, Pennsylvania; Professor S. B. McClintock, Pittsburgh; Professor W. P. Blake, New Haven, Conn.; Hon. Morton McMichael, of Philadelphia; Mr. John Sherman, Jr., Washington, D. C.; Mr. E. B. Elliott, Washington, D. C.; Professor J. E. Hilgard, Washington, D. C., and Dr. T. S. Bell, Louisville, Ky.

On Wednesday morning, February 9th, 1876, the commissioners assembled at the Mint at the appointed hour.

The first business in order is to count the sample coins which the attendants have brought in bags from the pyx or sample-box. (Fig. 1.) In order that the test may extend to every coinage of the year, the law requires that at each delivery of coins at a mint, a certain number of pieces of each denomination shall be taken out indiscriminately, carefully labeled and placed in a chest having two pad-locked locks, one of the keys of which is kept by the Treasurer [sic, "Superintendent"] and the other by the Assayer. The samples of each melt [sic, "delivery"] are kept separately and at the end of the month they are tied up in a bag. There are therefore twelve of the bags for each mint for the year. All of the bags are sent to Philadelphia to be opened by the commissioners, who count the coins and submit them to careful scrutiny. As soon as a commissioner finishes counting the pile which is before him, he announces the result to the secretary, who records it.

The Committee on Assaying is then furnished with a sufficient number of gold and silver coins for its purpose, and a careful record is made of them. The Committee on Weighing also take from the gold and silver coins of each mint a certain number, not less than ten, which they weigh in bulk. (Fig. 2.) They also take any number of pieces, not less than five, and of different denominations, to be weighed singly. (Fig. 3.) Finally they weigh on a large balance the whole mass of gold and silver coins coming from each mint which remains after the pieces for assay have been removed.

The Committee on Assaying, with the coins to be tested, proceed to the furnace-room, and after examining the black-lead crucibles, to be sure that they are clean (Fig. 4), cause a portion of each parcel of gold to be melted into an ingot. In the case of silver, the sample for the assay of mass is not cut from the ingot, but taken by granulation in water previously to pouring the molten metal into the mold.

The gold is assayed by cupellation and quartation; the silver by precipitation. One-half a gramme of gold is weighed out upon a balance sensitive to the twenty-thousandth of a gramme, i.e., the ten-thousandth of the weight employed (Fig. 5). All the lesser weights are decimal subdivisions of this half gramme. The weights used for this process are kept in a box with two independent locks, the key of one of which is in the possession of the Director of the Mint, and

¹ *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, March 4, 1876. p167, 169.

the other in that of the United States District Judge.

The samples from which the metal assay is taken are hammered, and subsequently laminated between two rollers (Fig. 6), to facilitate cutting of minute portions. Each lamina is stamped with a distinctive number.

Side by side with the coin assay a test assay is conducted, in which the metal used is pure gold, cut from a roll kept for the purpose, in the box containing the weights. As the standard fineness of the United States is 900 parts pure metal of gold to 100 of alloy, the test assays are made upon 900 one-thousandths of a half-gramme.

Silver is then weighed out for the quartation, from a roll of the pure metal, also kept in the box with the weights, and the several samples are wrapped, along with the silver in pure lead-foil, and placed in the order of their numbers in cupels, and put into a muffle-furnace (Fig. 7). Here they remain until the base-metal is separated; they are then withdrawn from the muffle, hammered, annealed, and laminated between two rollers, and stamped with numbers. The thin laminae are then rolled into cornets, with the numbers visible on the end, and are deposited in a matrass, and boiled for twenty minutes in nitric acid (Fig. 8); then washed in distilled water, heated to redness, and finally weighed again. In this way the fineness of the gold is determined.

The silver assays are made by weighing out 1,115 parts of the metal under trial, these parts being milligrammes, and 1,005 parts of pure silver, by way of comparison. All the weighed specimens are introduced into numbered bottles, when nitric acid is added and a gentle heat applied.

The solution being complete, precipitation is effected by introducing from a pipette into each bottle (Fig. 9), one declitre of a standard solution of pure table salt, so prepared as to contain in this measure 542.74 milligrammes of the salt—the quantity necessary to precipitate one thousand milligrammes, or one gramme of silver. The white curdy precipitate of chloride of silver is made to subside by violent shaking; for this purpose a mechanical agitator is employed (Fig. 10), put in motion by power derived from the [power] shafting in the assay department, to which expedient contributes greatly to economy of time. When the liquid is clear, a small pipette is used, graduated so that each division indicates a quantity of reagent sufficient to throw down one milligramme of silver (Fig. 11), and the number of these parts which are required to complete the precipitation fully, exhibit the proportion of pure silver in one thousand parts of the metal under trial.

In every stage of the weighing and assaying careful memoranda are kept by the members of the Commission, and the results are compared and studied previous to reading [of] the report.

The Commission found everything relating to the Mint in Philadelphia, as well as in all the branch mints, entirely within the standard required by law and so reported to the President of the United States through the Secretary of the Treasury.

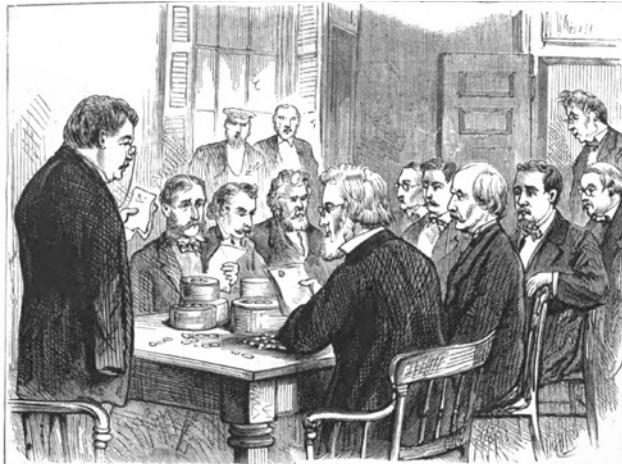


FIG. 1—COUNTING THE SAMPLES OF COIN.

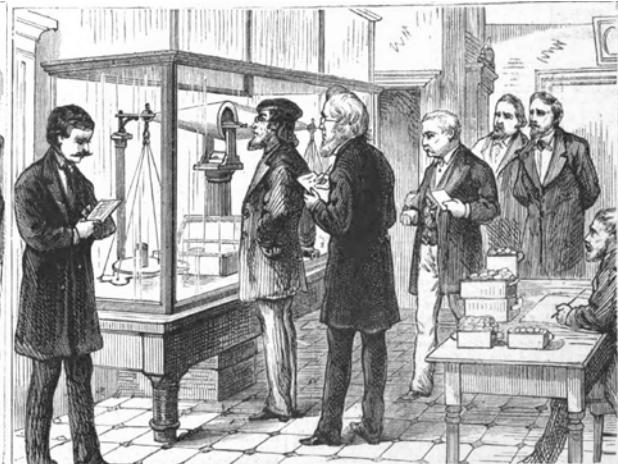


FIG. 2—WEIGHING THE SAMPLES OF COIN.



FIG. 3—WEIGHING THE SINGLE PIECES.

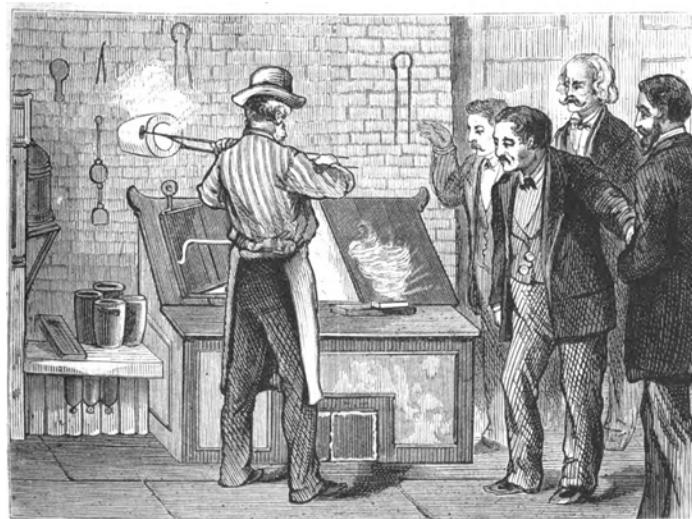


FIG. 4—SHOWING THAT THE BLACK-LEAD CRUCIBLE IS CLEAR.



FIG. 5—WEIGHING THE CLIPPINGS PREVIOUS TO CUPELLING.



FIG. 6—ROLLING OUT THE SAMPLES.



FIG. 7—CUPELLING THE GOLD TO SEPARATE IT FROM ITS ALLOY, ALL EXCEPT THE SILVER.



FIG. 8—DISSOLVING THE SILVER BY NITRIC ACID, AND THE ALLOY OF THE GOLD BY NITRIC ACID BATH.

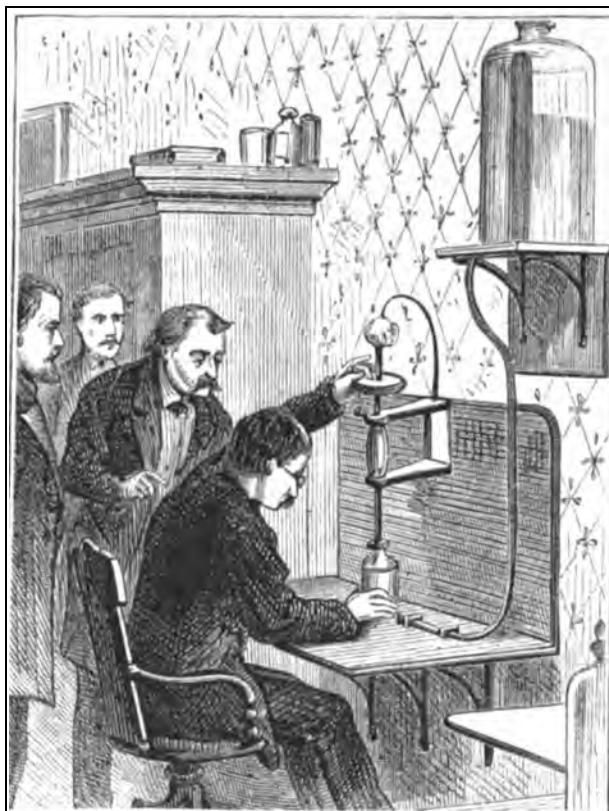


FIG. 9—PUTTING THE SALT WATER INTO THE SOLUTION OF THE COIN IN BOTTLES.



FIG. 10—MECHANICAL AGITATOR USED TO MAKE THE CHLORIDE OF SILVER SUBSIDE.

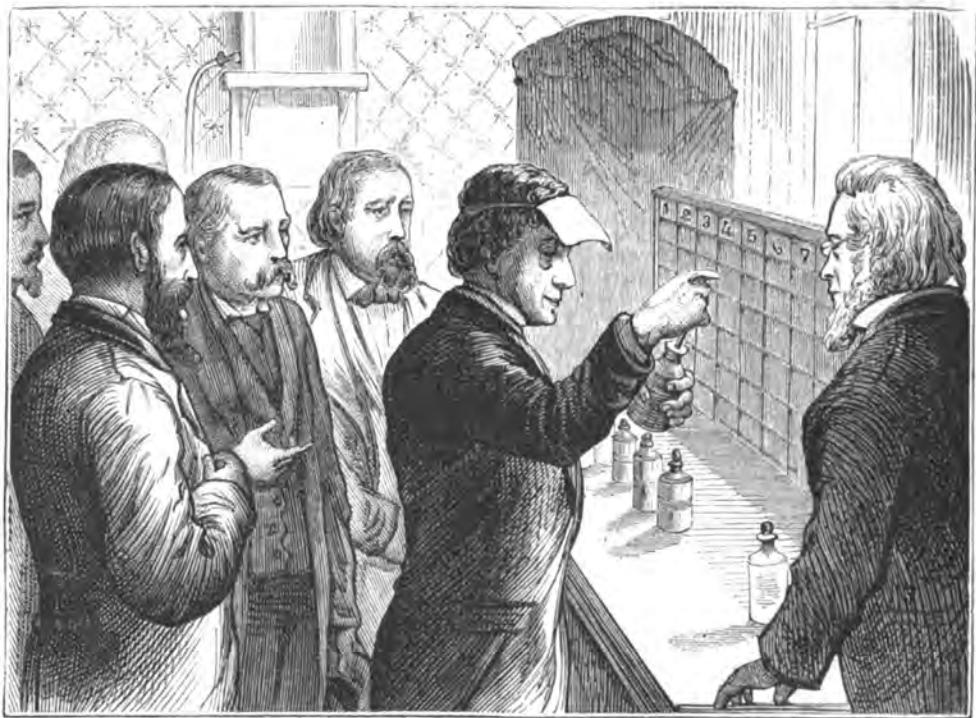


FIG. 11—THE LAST OPERATION, TO EXHIBIT THE PROPORTION OF PURE SILVER.